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Flyer hits pilot over flight delay, arrested

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Revanth to launch 'Invest in T'gana' campaign at Davos

ZURICH, 15 JAN

Excitement for a "fascinating new journey" marked the start of Telangana's participation at the 2024 World Economic Forum (WEF). State Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, along with his colleague Sridhar Babu Duddilla, met with prominent members of the Indian diaspora at Zurich airport on the way to Davos. The diaspora members expressed enthusiasm at being part of "reimagining and recarving a new Telangana," with a focus on inclusive growth, balanced development, and progress for all. "Delighted to meet and briefly interact with my colleague Sridhar Babu Duddilla, several members of the Indian diaspora at Zurich airport today. *—PTI*

Flyer hits pilot at Delhi airport over flight delay

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

A passenger on an IndiGo flight was arrested after he assaulted a pilot when he was making an announcement regarding a delay in takeoff at the Delhi airport, police said on Monday. A purported video of the incident, which took place Sunday, surfaced on social media and showed Sahil Katariya hitting the pilot as he was making the announcement inside the aircraft, which was bound for Goa. The flight took off from Delhi at 6 pm after a delay of more than 10 hours, according to flight tracking website flightradar24. The incident happened on a day dense fog impacted operations at Delhi airport leading to delayed flights. *—PTI*

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Madrid beat Barca 4-1 to win Spanish Super Cup

RIYADH, 15 JAN

Vin cius J nior did his best Cristiano Ronaldo impression in Saudi Arabia, scoring a hat trick and leading Real Madrid to a 4-1 rout of Barcelona and the Spanish Super Cup trophy. Vin cius scored his three goals in the first half as Madrid beat Barcelona to lift its first trophy of the season on Sunday. After his first goal, the Brazil forward imitated the trademark celebration of the former Madrid great, with Ronaldo reportedly at the Riyadh stadium. "It was for Cris, because he is my idol and now he is playing here," said Vin cius, who was named the best player of the final. "I'm very happy with myself and with my team. It's not easy to play against Barcelona and to win 4-1 is tough. We played an almost perfect match." *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 8

Dharavi residents to get 350 sqft flats: Adani Group

MUMBAI, 15 JAN

The Adani group on Monday said it will offer eligible residents of the Dharavi slum clusters new flats measuring 350 sq ft. The Adani group, which is redeveloping Dharavi slums in collaboration with the Maharashtra government, claimed the flat size was "17 per cent more" than what is offered as part of slum redevelopment projects. The new flats will have a kitchen and toilet, Adani said, adding that earlier, the dwellers of informal settlements were given houses measuring 269 sq ft. Since 2018, the state government started giving them homes measuring 315-322 sq ft. The redeveloped area will also have community halls, recreational areas, public gardens, dispensaries and daycare centres for children. *—PTI*

5 billion get poorer as 5 billionaires double wealth

Oxfam claims it would take more than 2 centuries to end poverty

Jeff Bezos, Amazon CEO; Warren Buffett, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway; Bernard Arnault, CEO of Louis Vuitton; Larry Ellison, Oracle Co-founder; Elon Musk, X owner ***PHOTOS: PTI***

DAVOS, 15 JAN

Fortunes of five richest men have more than doubled since 2020 and the world could have its first-ever trillionaire in just a decade while it would take more than two centuries to end poverty, rights group Oxfam said on Monday.

Releasing its annual inequality report on the first day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting here, Oxfam said seven of 10 of the world's biggest corporations have a billionaire as a CEO, or principal shareholder.

It further said that 148 top corporations made USD 1.8 trillion in profits, 52 per cent up on three-year average, and dished out huge payouts to rich shareholders, while hundreds of millions faced cuts in real-term pay.

Oxfam called for a new era of public action, including public services, corporate regulation, breaking up monopolies and enacting permanent wealth and excess profit taxes. The world's five richest men have more than doubled their fortunes from USD 405 billion to USD 869 billion since 2020 "at a rate of USD 14 million per hour", while nearly five billion people have already been made poorer in this "decade of division", said the Oxfam report on inequality and global corporate power. "If current trends continue, the world will have its first trillionaire within a decade but poverty won't be eradicated for another 229 years," it said. Titled 'Inequality Inc.', the report said seven of ten of the world's biggest corporations have a billionaire as CEO, or principal shareholder, and these corporations are worth USD 10.2 trillion, equivalent to more than the combined GDPs of all countries in Africa and Latin America.

"We are witnessing the beginnings of a decade of division, with billions of people shouldering the economic shockwaves of pandemic, inflation and war, while billionaires' fortunes boom. "This inequality is no accident; the billionaire class is ensuring corporations deliver more wealth to them at the expense of everyone else," Oxfam Director Amitabh Behar said. Despite representing just 21 per cent of the global population, rich countries in the Global North own 69 per cent of global wealth and are home to 74 per cent of the world's billionaire wealth, Oxfam said. *—PTI*

24.8 CR MOVED OUT OF POVERTY IN INDIA: NITI

New Delhi, 15 Jan

As many as 24.82 crore people moved out of multidimensional poverty in nine years from 2013-14 to 2022-23, with Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh registering the largest decline, NITI Aayog said in a report on Monday. Multidimensional poverty is measured by improvement in health, education, and standard of living, it said. According to the NITI discussion paper, multidimensional poverty in India was found to have declined from 29.17 per cent in 2013-14 to 11.28 per cent in 2022-23, with about 24.82 crore people moving out of this bracket. The national multidimensional poverty measures simultaneous deprivations across three equally weighted dimensions of health, education, and standard of living that are represented by 12 sustainable development goals-aligned indicators, said NITI Aayog. *—PTI*

BSP will go solo in LS polls: Mayawati

LUCKNOW, 15 JAN

Mayawati ***PHOTO: PTI***

BSP president Mayawati on Monday said her party would contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections on its own but did not rule out a post-poll alliance.

Talking to reporters at the state party office on her 68th birthday, she also categorically denied reports in a section of the media about her retirement from politics and stressed that she will continue to strengthen the party till her last breath.

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister also said she has received an invitation for the 22 January consecration in Ayodhya but a decision on attending it has not been taken yet because of certain party programmes. Mayawati also cautioned her party workers against Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, saying he changed colours like a chameleon to mislead them.

She said after the Lok Sabha elections, BSP can join the government at the Centre on the basis of proper representation to the party. "Unlike the previous times, the party is no longer going to give 'free support' from outside," the BSP Chief said.

"Regarding the elections, I want to make it clear again that our party will fight the Lok Sabha polls alone on the strength of the poor and marginalised sections, especially Dalits, tribals, Muslims and people of other religious minority communities," she said. *—PTI*

Govt gives Rs 540 cr to 1 lakh tribals

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday that the country can develop only if various welfare schemes reach all, asserting that it is his guarantee that everyone - even those in the remotest of areas - will benefit from them.

Releasing the first instalment of Rs 540 crore to one lakh tribal beneficiaries of a rural housing scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) via video conferencing, he said the 10 years of his government have been dedicated to the poor.

Invoking Shabari, a tribal woman depicted in the epic Ramayana who served berries to Lord Ram during his stay in forests, the Prime Minister said it is natural for him to remember her when he has undertaken a special religious ritual till the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya on 22 January.

"The story of Shri Ram is not possible without Mata Shabari," he said, asserting that she played a big role in the transformation of 'prince' Ram into 'maryada purushottam' Ram.

The budget of many welfare schemes for the Scheduled Tribes has risen by five times and the scholarship for tribal students has grown by two-and-a-half times in the last 10 years, he said, adding that the work is on to construct more than 500 Eklavya model school for them while only 90 existed earlier. *—PTI*

THE FESTIVE SPIRIT

Women cook rice during celebrations of harvest festival Pongal, in Bengaluru on Monday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

AADITYA SLAMS SHINDE OVER 50 'MIDDLEMEN' AT WEF

MUMBAI, 15 JAN

Former Maharashtra minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray on Monday claimed nearly "50 people", including "some middlemen" and personal assistants, will be part of the delegation that will travel with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde for the World Economic Forum (WEF) gathering in Davos, Switzerland.

Shinde's office disputed Thackeray's claim on the composition and strength of the delegation for the WEF 2024 in Davos, where hundreds of world leaders, business heads, academics and investors are converging for their annual gathering from 15 to 19 January.

Speaking to reporters here, Thackeray sought to know if the Foreign Ministry has cleared the visit of the delegation for the WEF congregation.

Thackeray took potshots at Shinde, who will attend the gathering on Tuesday, over his visit to the Swiss town and referred to the latter's rebellion in June 2022 when he flew to Guwahati with Shiv Sena MLAs supporting him. *—PTI*

MODI TALKS TO PUTIN

India to support Russia's BRICS presidency

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Narendra Modi ***PHOTO: PTI***

Vladimir Putin ***PHOTO: PTI***

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday agreed to chalk out a roadmap for future initiatives to further strengthen the "special and privileged strategic partnership" between the two nations.

Modi said he had a "good conversation" with Putin and exchanged views on regional and global issues, including Russia's Presidency of the BRICS in 2024.

Last month, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Russia, during which the two countries decided to step up military and technical cooperation, including manufacturing of modern weaponry.

"Had a good conversation with President Putin. We discussed various positive developments in our Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership and agreed to chalk out a roadmap for future initiatives. We also had a useful exchange of views on various regional and global issues, including Russia's Presidency of the BRICS," the Prime Minister said on X.

Later in a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said Modi and Putin reviewed progress on a number of issues of bilateral cooperation in follow-up to recent high-level exchanges between the two countries. "They positively assessed the developments in bilateral relations and agreed to develop a roadmap for future initiatives to further strengthen the India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership," the MEA statement said.

Modi also conveyed his best wishes for Russia's Presidency of BRICS in 2024 and assured India's full support, the MEA statement said, adding that the two leaders agreed to remain in touch. Russia assumed BRICS presidency from 1 January, 2024. *—PTI*

Amid Red Sea crisis, EAM pushes for Chabahar port

TEHRAN, 15 JAN

S Jaishankar with Ebrahim Raisi ***PHOTO: PTI***

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday held wide ranging discussions with Iranian counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian here. Their discussion focused on the long term framework for India's involvement with the strategically vital Chabahar port and the North-South connectivity project.

Jaishankar, who is in the Iranian capital as part of the ongoing high-level exchanges between the two sides, also called on Iranian President Dr Ebrahim Raisi and conveyed the greetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He also spoke about threats to maritime shipping in the region and stressed that it's important that this issue be "speedily addressed", in an apparent reference to targeting of merchant vessels in the Red Sea by Iranian-backed Yemen's Houthi rebels amid the Israel-Hamas conflict. The US and the UK have launched air strikes targeting the Houthi positions in Yemen.

Other issues on the agenda were the Gaza situation, Afghanistan, Ukraine and BRICS cooperation," Jaishankar said after his meeting with the Iranian foreign minister.

Later, he called on Iranian President Raisi and apprised him of his "productive discussions" with the Iranian ministers.

Foreign Minister Amirabdollahian and his Indian counterpart discussed developing bilateral relations. *—PTI*

PURI SHANKARACHARYA SAYS

'Skipping Ram Temple opening not about ego'

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

The Shankaracharya of Puri, Swami Nischalanand Saraswati Maharaj, has clarified that the decision to skip the consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is rooted in the deviation from established traditions during the installation of the Ram idol.

"The [four] Shankaracharyas uphold their own dignity. This is not about ego. Are we expected to merely sit outside and applaud when the Prime Minister installs the idol of Ram Lalla? The presence of a 'secular' government does not imply the obliteration of tradition," he remarked.

Opposition parties, including the Congress, have claimed that the Shankaracharyas have decided against attending the 22 January event after objecting to the pran pratishtha ceremony at an incomplete temple.

Turning down the invite for the pran pratishtha event, Congress leader Ashok Gehlot said that since even Shankaracharyas (religious guru) would not be attending the Ram Temple event, it showed that the reason for not attending it is important.

"When they politicised the event and took decisions, our Shankaracharyas, who are at the top of Sanatan Dharma and guide us, said that they will not be attending the event. This has become such an issue that all Shankaracharyas are saying they will boycott this event. If the Shankaracharyas are saying so, it has its own importance," Gehlot said. *—ANI*

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Shankaracharyas are objecting to the pran pratishtha ceremony at an incomplete temple ***PHOTO: X/SHRIRAMTHEERTH***

PHOTO: PTI

2 mowed down by vehicle while changing tyre

TUMAKURU, 15 JAN

Two men died after they were hit by a vehicle when they were fixing a tyre in Tumakuru on Sunday. The incident took place at 11.30 pm at Kuntegowdanahalli Gate in Sira taluk. The deceased Mahesh Kumar, 45, was an advocate and Umesh, 40, a clerk. Both were residents of Avalahalli village near Bengaluru. The vehicle is yet to be traced. Speaking to Salar News, Inspector Raveendra PL said, "While travelling to Hiriyur taluk in Chitradurga, they parked their car to change the stepney when they were hit by an unidentified vehicle, suspected to be a lorry. Both of them died on the spot." According to the Kallambella police, the accused driver fled the scene.
—Salar News

3 killed, 6 injured after car turns turtle in Davangere

BENGALURU, 15 JAN

Three people were killed and six others injured after a car turned turtle in Davangere on Monday. According to the police, the accident occurred when the driver tried to avoid crashing into a cow. The deceased are Nagaraj, 38; Manjunath, 45; and Gowtham, 17, the residents of Chandanakere village in Bhadravathi. The incident took place near Chinnikatti village in Nyamati taluk of Davangere when the victims were returning from work. Accident in Bengaluru, 1 dead A 25-year-old died in a car accident on CMR Road near Banaswadi after he lost control and crashed into a nearby tree on Monday. Around 2.30pm, deceased Melvin Joshua lost control, crashed into a parked car and died. *—Salar News*

Right-wing activists protest over 'love jihad'

BENGALURU, 15 JAN

Right-wing activists staged a protest in Mandya on Monday after a 15-year-old girl allegedly eloped with a 19-year-old boy. The parents of the girl filed a complaint with KR Patna police station in Mandya district on 12 January. Alleging the case is of 'love jihad', the activists said Hindu girls were being targeted in the town and demanded a probe by National Investigation Agency (NIA). Acting on the complaint, police tracked down the boy and girl, who were residents of KR Pet town. The parents also filed a case citing sections under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act against the boy.
—Salar News

PHOTO: PTI

Gold worth ₹50.93L seized at Mangaluru airport

MANGALURU, 15 JAN

Customs officials at the Mangaluru International Airport have seized gold worth Rs 50.93 lakh which was being smuggled by two passengers who arrived from Abu Dhabi and Dubai by Air India Express flights. A Customs release here said the seizure was made on January 12. The passengers had concealed the gold in various forms, including three oval-shaped objects with gold paste hidden in their rectum and gold paste concealed inside chocolate boxes in their checked-in baggage. The 24-carat purity gold, weighing 815 gm, has an estimated value of Rs 50,93,750, the release said.
—Salar News

No question of sparing anyone in gangrape case: CM

BJP claims that attempts are being made to hush up the case

HAVERI, 15 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said there was no question of sparing anyone involved in the gang rape of a woman allegedly by six youth in Haveri district.

Six people allegedly barged into a hotel room and assaulted an inter-faith couple during their stay in Hanagal Taluk of Haveri district on 8 January, following which two of them have been arrested. BJP has accused that attempts are being made to hush up the case.

"We have arrested all the accused people. Investigation is going on. We will not allow anyone to take law into their hands irrespective of the faith and caste they belong to," the Chief Minister said here. Siddaramaiah said the government will take action as per law.

PHOTO: PTI

> **We have arrested all the accused people. Investigation is going on. We will not allow anyone to take law into their hands irrespective of the faith and caste they belong to. Just because former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai has demanded an SIT probe we will not form it**
>
> -Chief Minister Siddaramaiah

On the question of no one from the government having consoled her or offered any relief, the Chief Minister said he received the application just now and government will consider her plea.

Regarding the BJP's demand for setting up a Special Investigation Team (SIT), Siddaramaiah said those investigating the case now are police and those who will be part of the SIT will be police only. "Investigations are going on. Let the preliminary investigation report come out. Just because former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai has demanded an SIT probe we will not form it," the Chief Minister said.

Meanwhile, the 26-year-old survivor alleged that no protection was given to her when she was taken home. She also said at least two accused whose photographs police showed her were not involved in the crime. The survivor also charged that the police were not investigating the case seriously.

According to the survivor, the incident happened on 8 January. At 1pm, she checked into the hotel room with a KSRTC driver aged 40, with whom she has been in a relationship for the past three years, they said. The entire assault which happened inside the hotel room was filmed by the gang.

About the 2024 budget, Siddaramaiah said since the code of conduct of the upcoming Lok Sabha election will be in place from the first week of March, the budget will be presented in February itself.

Responding to the protests that the farmers have not been compensated, he said the temporary compensation of Rs 2,000 will be given to the farmers and after the compensation is received from the Central government, the compensation will be given again as per the NDRF regulations.
—Salar News/PTI

KHARGE TO ATTEND

Congress to hold Lok Sabha meet on 19 Jan

BENGALURU, 15 JAN

Congress will hold Lok Sabha Election Committee meeting on 19 January in City's Indira Bhavan at 4pm, said Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday.

He initially said that party workers will also meet on 21 January in Mangaluru, but this date was postponed.

The date is yet to be announced. "Observers from Delhi will attend the meet on 19 January where the report submitted by district in-charge ministers on Lok Sabha candidate selection will be discussed after which the names will be announced," said Shivakumar.

Reportedly, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge is also expected to attend the party workers meet.

Meanwhile, Shivakumar said that the Corporation and Board selection list will be published soon. He dismissed the possibility of postponing the list.

"We will give the appointment to all the people that we promised during the election," he said

DK Shivakumar PHOTO: PTI

'Anantkumar Hegde lacks mental stability'

Shivakumar dubbed BJP MP Anantkumar Hegde as a mentally unstable person. The Deputy Chief Minister was reacting to Hegde's remarks against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. He said, "People with mental instability will talk like that. It is a good development that BJP leaders have understood that his words were wrong."

Shivakumar wished the people of the State for Sankranthi and prayed for relief from the drought
—Salar News

A mother leopard and her cub got stuck in a 300-metre-long water pipe in Ramanahalli, Yelwala Hobli PHOTO: SALAR

Leopard and cub rescued after being stuck in drain pipe

MYSURU, 15 JAN

- The incident occurred on Sunday when the leopards, in search of food, accidently entered the empty pipe designed for draining water from the canal

A mother leopard and her cub got stuck in a 300-metre-long water pipe in Ramanahalli, Yelwala Hobli. The incident occurred on Sunday when the leopards, in search of food, accidently entered the empty pipe designed for draining water from the canal. The locals notified the forest department about the trapped leopards.

Upon receiving the distress call, forest department officials along with a specialised leopard capture operation team and veterinarians rushed to the location. The team safely caught the leopards by sedating them.

After the successful capture, the health of the leopards was thoroughly examined and were later released back into the forest.

Range Forest Officer Surendra, who led the operation explained that the area had witnessed a similar incident last year when a leopard was stuck in the same pipeline. Leopards often venture into these areas as people from surrounding villages bring cattle, sheep, and goats for grazing.

The rescue operation carried out with the participation of Assistant Conservator of Forest Laxmikant and Veterinarian Dr Madan coordinated with the forest department in ensuring the safety of wildlife.
—Salar News

HUES OF POLLS

BJP State President BY Vijayendra with MP PC Mohan and other leaders give final touches to a painting of PM Narendra Modi as part of the campaign for coming Lok Sabha elections at Sheshadripuram in Bengaluru on Monday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

T-20: Metro trains to run till 11.30pm

BENGALURU,15 JAN

Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) has extended Namma Metro services till 11.30 pm on Wednesday for the T-20 series cricket match between India and Afghanistan at Chinnaswamy Stadium. The return tickets will be available for sale at all metro stations from 2 pm.

It also advised the public to purchase QR tickets on WhatsApp, Namma Metro app or PayTM prior to the cricket match for hassle-free return journey. Smart cards and National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) cards can be used as usual. The QR code tickets will be sold at a discount of 5 per cent, and can be purchased on the day of the match. *—Salar News*

BMRCL extendes Namma Metro services till 11.30 pm on Wednesday for T-20 series cricket match PHOTO: PTI

Students clean toilets, school head booked

BENGALURU, 15 JAN

An FIR has been lodged against the headmistress of Maulana Azad Model English Medium School for allegedly forcing students to perform domestic tasks, including cleaning toilets and cleaning gardens at her home. The case was registered at Roza police station after a student's father raised concerns about his son being used for school and domestic work.

The student's father accused headmistress Johar Jabeena of compelling him to clean toilets, sweep the office, water the garden, and perform other domestic chores. The father, Mohammad Zameer, revealed that his son was previously used for work at a birthday event organised at the headmistress' residence. Despite repeated warnings, the alleged exploitation continued, leading to the father filing a police complaint. Following this, other parents are now planning to file police complaints as well. The incident highlights concerns about inappropriate use of students for non-educational tasks and raises questions about the school's management practices. *—Salar News*

A student cleaning a toilet PHOTO: SALAR

- The student's father accused headmistress Johar Jabeena of compelling him to clean toiletsand perform other domestic chores

BJP MP BOOKED FOR PROVOCATIVE STATEMENTS

BENGALURU, 15 JAN

Kumta police in Uttara Kannada district have registered a case on its own against BJP MP Anantkumar Hegde for his provocative speech.

Police booked him based on a viral video where he is seen calling for the demolition of mosques allegedly built on temples, ahead of the Ram Temple consecration on 22 January in Ayodhya. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Kannada and Culture Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi slammed the MP for his remarks.Siddaramaiah said, "Anantkumar Hegde was missing to date. He has made a statement as the election is approaching. Has he done anything to his constituency?." The Uttara Kannada MP, who is known for his virulent speeches, had been silent for the past four years but has suddenly become active ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. *—PTI*

South Africa's ruling party leaders to meet Nadda

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

A four-member delegation of South Africa's ruling party arrived here on Monday on a three-day visit, during which they will interact with BJP chief J P Nadda and other leaders to discuss the party's ideology and functioning.

The African National Congress (ANC) delegation arrived here on an invitation from the BJP as part of its global outreach programme, the party said in a statement.

The delegation comprised ANC secretary general Fikile Mbalula, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Alvin Botes, who is also a member of the ANC's executive committee, Cheslyn Edward Moster and Phillip Musekwa, the BJP said.

"A four-member delegation of senior leaders of the ruling party of South Africa, African National Congress, arrived in New Delhi today on the invitation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)," it said.

"During their three-day visit, the delegates and BJP leaders will exchange information on ideology and functioning of respective parties. The delegation will also meet BJP national president J P Nadda and other senior leaders of the party," the BJP said.

This visit is part of the party's global outreach programme "Know BJP", launched by Nadda on the 43rd foundation day of the party. *—PTI*

'Sensitise staff to inform passengers about delays'

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Aviation watchdog DGCA on Monday asked airlines to publish accurate real-time information regarding flight delays and appropriately sensitise staff at airports to suitably communicate with passengers amid fog-related disruptions at airports.

Against the backdrop of a significant number of flights getting delayed and cancelled and passengers facing tough times, the regulator has come out with a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Earlier in the day, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said all stakeholders are working round-the-clock to minimise fog-related disruptions in flight operations and that DGCA will come out with SOPs to ensure "better communication and facilitation of passengers to minimise discomfort in view of flight cancellations and delays due to adverse weather".

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Monday said that airlines should be required to publish accurate real-time information regarding delays in their flights.

PHOTO: PTI

There should also be appropriate sensitisation of the airline staff at the airports to suitably communicate with and continuously guide and inform the passengers about flight delays, according to a release.

This also comes amid an incident of a passenger assaulting an IndiGo pilot as he was making a flight delay announcement onboard an aircraft that was bound for Goa. The incident happened at the Delhi airport on Sunday.

"In view of the prevalent fog season and adverse weather conditions, airlines may cancel, sufficiently in advance, such flights that are anticipated to be delayed or consequentially delayed on account of such conditions beyond a period of three hours with a view to obviate congestion at the airport and mitigate passenger inconvenience," DGCA said.
—PTI

FESTIVAL OF HARVEST

Farmers celebrate Sankranti with food & fire

MYSURU, 15 JAN

The celebration of Makara Sankranti in the rural areas of Mysuru district has a distinct flavour. The farmers in the hinterland used the harvest festival to express gratitude towards their livestock.

They washed and painted their animals, and decorated them before worshipping them through in a special puja. The celebration culminated with crossing a fire.

In Siddalingpur on Bengaluru-Mysuru highway, there is a special and rare tradition. Farmers lit a fire using paddy sheaves and leapt their cattle over them. Spectators from far and wide gathered here to witness this unique celebration, showcasing the deep bond between the farmers and their livestock.

As part of the Sankranti celebrations, sesame and jaggery were distributed in the city, setting the tone for the day's festivities. Farmers, who toiled in the fields throughout the year, took the opportunity to express their gratitude to the cattle that provided them sustenance.

Celebrations of Makara Sankranti take varied hues in different parts of the State. In North Karnataka, women adorned themselves in vibrant Ilkal sarees and jewellery, singing festive songs. In Dharwad, members of Folklore Research Centre prepared a variety of traditional dishes, adding to the festive spirit of Sankranti.
—Salar News

A cow jumps across a fire during an annual ritual on Makar Sankranti festival, in Siddalingpur on the Bengaluru-Mysuru highway, Monday PHOTO: SALAR

Security beefed up in Matoshree after 'sabotage' call

MUMBAI, 15 JAN

The police have increased security at Matoshree, the residence of Shiv Sena (UBT) Chief Uddhav Thackeray here, after receiving a phone call about sabotage near the premises, an official said on Monday. The control room of the Maharashtra police headquarters received a threat call about sabotage near Matoshree on Sunday evening, he said. The caller informed the police that there was a threat to Matoshree, as he had heard a group of four to five people discussing sabotage in front of Thackeray's residence, the official said. The caller claimed he was travelling on a Mumbai-Gujarat train when he heard a group of people discussing sabotage plans in Urdu, he said. Taking serious cognisance of the call, the police have increased security for Matoshree, he said.The police tried to track down the caller, who provided information about the sabotage threat, but his phone remained switched off after the call. *—PTI*

BJP's wall-writing campaign for LS polls launched

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

BJP President JP Nadda launched his party's wall-writing campaign in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls here on Monday by drawing a picture of its poll symbol, "lotus" above the slogan "Ek Baar Phir Se Modi Sarkar" (Once again a Modi government). After participating in the campaign at a local market, Nadda appealed to people to ensure a historic win for Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the upcoming general election and make Narendra Modi the prime minister for a third straight term to ensure that the pace of development and global recognition of the country continue unabated. He expressed confidence that people will elect a stable, inclusive government and help realise the BJP's resolve of service, good governance and development under Modi's leadership.*—PTI*

Jarange to launch indefinite fast for Maratha quota

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 15 JAN

Maratha activist Manoj Jarange on Monday said he would launch an indefinite fast for quota in Mumbai on 26 January, either at Azad Maidan or Shivaji Park ground. "Maratha community members will set out for Mumbai from Antarwali Sarati village on 20 January. Part of their journey will be on foot and the rest using vehicles. Our target is to reach Mumbai by 26 January ," he said.I will start walking from Antarwali Sarati village on 20 January, he said. "Agitators will start from Antarwali Sarati at 9am on 20 January. They will walk till noon every day. Later will board vehicles and proceed towards their next destination for a night halt," he added.*—PTI*

Home Minister Shah's sister no more

AHMEDABAD, 15 JAN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah's elder sister died during treatment at a hospital in Mumbai on Monday, a BJP office-bearer said.Amit Shah has cancelled all his engagements in Gujarat following the demise of Rajeshwariben Shah, he said. Rajeshwariben was in her mid-60s. She was not keeping well for some time and undergoing treatment at a hospital in Mumbai, where she breathed her last in the early hours of Monday, the office-bearer said."Following the death of his ailing sister, Shah has cancelled all his programs for the day. Rajeshwariben's mortal remains have been brought at her residence here today morning and her last rites will be performed at Thaltej crematorium in the afternoon," he said.Shah, who represents Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency, was in Ahmedabad since Sunday to celebrate Makar Sankranti with BJP supporters. *—PTI*

'Cong wants to make Manipur peaceful'

RaGa says Congress' yatra is to bring people of India together

SENAPATI, 15 JAN

The Congress stands with the people of Manipur and wants to make the state peaceful and harmonious again, former party chief Rahul Gandhi said on Monday as he interacted with the people on the second day of his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

Starting the yatra this morning in a custom-made Volvo bus, Gandhi also walked for some distance meeting people and enquiring about their problems.

Several people, a number of them women and children, had lined up along the yatra route and cheered on Gandhi as his bus made its way along several busy areas here.

Addressing the people from atop his bus in Senapati, Gandhi said the Congress did a yatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and the idea was to bring people of India together.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', at Sekmai village Manipur on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

"We wanted to do another yatra from east to west and we decided that the most powerful thing would be to start the yatra from Manipur so that the people of India get a sense of what the people of Manipur have been through, the difficulty that they have been through, the struggles they have been through," the Congress leader said.

"I understand that you have faced a tragedy, you have lost family members, you have lost property and I want you to know that we are fully standing with you, we want to bring peace back to Manipur. We want to make Manipur peaceful and harmonious again," he said.

He said he has been speaking with delegations who have been telling him about the issues of Manipur have been facing. *—PTI*

PM trying to 'cheat' tribals says Kharge

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of remembering tribal communities only ahead of elections and said his government is trying to befool the community by changing names of old schemes. Kharge also asked why the expenditure on tribals has reduced drastically during the Modi government.

"Even though for elections, at least the Prime Minister has remembered the welfare of tribals and various tribes today after 10 years" Kharge said in a post in Hindi on X. *—PTI*

ED summons Kavitha in Delhi excise case

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

The Enforcement Directorate has summoned BRS leader K Kavitha for a fresh round of questioning in connection with its probe into the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case, official sources said on Monday. The 45-year-old daughter of former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao has been asked to depose before the agency in Delhi on Tuesday, they said.

Sources, however, said that she may not depose before the agency and has communicated her decision to the investigating officer through an email.

Kavitha *PHOTO: PTI*

"There is a Supreme Court order that has said that the ED cannot summon K Kavitha in this case," her lawyer Nitesh Rana told PTI.

ED sources said that the BRS leader had obtained a temporary relief from the Supreme Court last year which is not valid now. She was questioned thrice in this case last year and the central agency recorded her statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLC has asserted in the past that she had done nothing wrong and alleged that the BJP-led Centre was "using" the ED as the saffron party could not gain a "backdoor entry" into Telangana. *—PTI*

- ED said the BRS leader had obtained a temporary relief from the Supreme Court last year which is not valid now.

CONG GEARS UP FOR LS POLL IN THRISSUR

T'PURAM, 15 JAN

Amid BJP's focus on Thrissur Lok Sabha seat, projecting actor-politician Suresh Gopi as its candidate, Congress on Monday said it would launch its campaign on 4 February with one lakh workers.

KPCC General Secretary TU Radhakrishnan said the final phase of the party's preparations for the parliament elections would commence on 4 February at Thrissur Thekkinkad Maidan, led by AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge. It said the conference aims to bring significant changes to how the Congress operates, focusing on empowering individual booths. *—PTI*

ED raids TMC leader in Bengal ration 'scam'

KOLKATA, 15 JAN

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday raided several premises linked to an arrested TMC leader and his associates in the alleged ration distribution scam in West Bengal.

ED teams went to four premises in central Kolkata and the office of a chartered accountant in Salt Lake on the eastern fringes of the city to carry out search operations, officials of the central agency said.

According to them, all these locations where searches were being conducted were linked to TMC leader and Bongaon Municipality's former chairman Shankar Adhya.

Central force personnel were seen guarding the premises where the raids were going on.

PHOTO: PTI

Adhya was earlier arrested from Simultala in Bongaon of North 24 Parganas district after searches were conducted by the agency at his properties.

He is considered to be close to state minister Jyoti Priya Mallick, who was also arrested in connection with the alleged scam last year. *—PTI*

BJP 'non-secular' for Ram Mandir: Muslim body

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) Chairman Hazrat Maulana Khalid Saifullah Rahmani has strongly condemned the Centre for its 'non-secular approach' ahead of the Ram temple consecration on 22 January. Rahmani said the event concerns only the Hindus in the country and asked the Islamic community to not participate in the religious ceremony. In a press note, he wrote "Although the Supreme Court has acknowledged that there was no temple beneath it, which was demolished to build a mosque, and there is no evidence that Lord Rama's birth occurred at that specific location...."

—Salar News

Murmu starts 3-day NE tour from Assam

GUWAHATI, 15 JAN

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday arrived here on a three-day tour to the northeast region, where she would take part in a series of programmes.

Murmu landed at the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati in a special Indian Air Force flight and she was accorded a warm welcome by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and several officials.

Murmu went to Tura in an Indian Air Force chopper to take part in several programmes in Meghalaya.

The President will inaugurate the Meghalaya Games at the PA Sangma Stadium in Tura later in the day.

This is her first visit to the hill state after she became the President.

President Murmu *PHOTO: PTI*

- The President will inaugurate the Meghalaya Games at the PA Sangma Stadium in Tura later in the day

Murmu will also address a gathering at Mawphlang and virtually inaugurate the upgraded Rongjeng Mangsang Adokgre Road and Mairang Ranigodown Azra Road as well as lay the foundation stones for Shillong Peak Ropeway and tourist accommodations in the villages of Kongthong, Mawlyngot and Kudengrim.

Prez Murmu greets Army personnel on Army Day

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday greeted Army personnel on the 76th Army Day and said that their patriotism remains a great source of inspiration for all citizens.

"In situations of conflict as well as peace, our valiant soldiers are ever ready to serve the nation in every way they can. Today, a grateful nation pays tribute to those who have laid down their lives for the motherland and salutes the spirit of the Indian Army! I offer my best wishes to all members of the Army," she said in a post on X. *—PTI*

CELEBRATIONS IN THE HOUSE

Councillors after the passing of the bill over the vesting powers of the standing committee of the House during a special session, at the Civic Centre in New Delhi on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Ram Lalla idol by Mysuru's Arun selected

AYODHYA, 15 JAN

A new idol of Ram Lalla sculpted by Mysuru-based Arun Yogiraj has been selected for installation at the Ram temple in Ayodhya, temple trust's general secretary Champat Rai said on Monday.

Replying to queries at a press conference here, he said the current idol of Ram Lalla, which is being worshipped for the last 70 years, will also be kept in the sanctum sanctorum of the new temple.

The Ram temple 'Pran Pratishtha' (consecration ceremony) is being organised on 22nd January, and according to Rai, it will begin at 12.20 pm.

The new idol whose consecration ceremony will be done is made of stone and "in my assessment it weighs somewhere between 150-200 kgs", he said.

The Lord Rama idol sculpted by Mysuru's Arun Yogiraj *PHOTO: PTI*

Rai said the idol depicts the deity as a five-year-old boy in standing posture and added that "on 18 January, the idol will be placed at its 'aasan' in 'garbh griha' (sanctum sanctorum)." *—PTI*

Trains' movement to be affected from 16 to 22 Jan

AYODHYA, 15 JAN

Ahead of the Ram temple consecration ceremony here, the movement of trains will be affected from 16 to 22 January due to doubling of tracks and electrification being done on top priority, a senior official said on Monday. 10 trains, including Vande Bharat, have been cancelled while 35 trains will run on alternate routes. *—PTI*

Haryana govt declares 'dry day' on 22 January

CHANDIGARH, 15 JAN

The Haryana government has declared a 'dry day' on 22 January in view of the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

The announcement was made by Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar here on Monday.

An official release quoting Khattar said all liquor establishments in the state will be closed on 22 January.

The 'pran pratishtha' ceremony will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other dignitaries.

Several BJP-ruled states, including Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, have already declared a dry day on 22 January.

On the Prime Minister's call for cleanliness at religious places, Khattar said 'poojas' and cleanliness activities are being held at religious places in the state from 14 to 22 January. *—PTI*

Big B buys 10,000 sqfeet plot worth Rs14.5cr in Ayodhya

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan has bought a 10,000 square feet plot for around Rs 14.5 crore in a project in Ayodhya that is being developed by Mumbai-based realty firm House of Abhinandan Lodha, sources said on Monday.

House of Abhinandan Lodha confirmed the deal but did not share any financial details.The company has signed an MoU with The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts to build a modern palace hotel in Ayodhya. *—PTI*

Grateful to be invited, but yet to decide: Mayawati

LUCKNOW, 15 JAN

BSP Supremo Mayawati on Monday said she has received an invitation for the 22 January consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya and is grateful for it, but a decision on attending it has not been taken yet because of certain party programmes. *—PTI*

Ex-Pb min held for laundering

CHANDIGARH, 15 JAN

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday arrested Congress leader and former Punjab forest minister Sadhu Singh Dharamsot under the anti-money laundering law in an investigation linked to an alleged forest scam in the state, official sources said.

The agency took the 64-year-old politician into custody under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in Jalandhar.

The ED had raided the premises of Dharamsot, another forest minister of the state Sangat Singh Giljian, some forest department officials and others in November last year.

- He was taken into custody under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in Jalandhar

The investigation pertains to charges of "bribery" in the state forest department against the issuance of permits for tree felling and for transfer/posting in the department, among other allegations.

Dharamsot has been a five-time MLA and was also arrested by the Punjab Vigilance Bureau last year in a case linked to alleged possession of disproportionate assets. He has represented the Nabha assembly seat while Giljian has been an MLA from the Urmar seat in Hoshiarpur district.

The money laundering case, filed under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, stems from an FIR of the Punjab Vigilance Bureau into alleged irregularities in the forest department and allegations of taking bribes by the ministers and officers concerned for issuing permits for felling of Khair trees, transfer/posting in the department, issuance of NOC from the department and purchase of tree guards. *—PTI*

Editors Guild dubs broadcast bill 'vague'

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

The Editors Guild of India (EGI) has said the draft Broadcast Services (Regulation) Bill circulated by the government is "vague and excessively intrusive".

In a letter to Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur, the Guild said the new bill would prove "adverse to the spirit of freedom of speech and freedom of the press guaranteed by the Constitution" and lay the ground for the creation of an "overarching censorship framework" through the establishment of a broadcast advisory council.

Outlining four major concerns, the Guild said the bill would result in an "overbearing system of self-regulation" mandating the creation of content evaluation committees in a manner that allows the government to have a greater degree of control on those committees. *—PTI*

POLITICAL SLUGFEST

Cong deviated from ideological roots: Deora

MUMBAI, 15 JAN

Former Union minister Milind Deora has justified his decision to quit the Congress and join Shiv Sena, alleging that the Grand Old Party has deviated from its ideological and organisational roots, "fostering" caste divisions, and targeting business houses.

Deora also said he aspired to collaborate with a leader who values constructive ideas, and that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has acknowledged his potential.

The former Mumbai South MP on Sunday morning resigned from the primary membership of the Congress, ending his family's "55-year-old association" with the party. Hours later he joined the Shiv Sena at the official residence of Shinde.

Deora later posted a statement on his social media account on X listing reasons for quitting Congress.

Deora, son of Congress veteran late Murli Deora, has been sulking since Congress' ally Shiv Sena (UBT) staked a claim on the Mumbai South parliamentary constituency for the upcoming elections.

Milind Deora *PHOTO: PTI*

Milind Deora was elected to Lok Sabha from Mumbai South in 2004 and 2009. He lost in 2014 and 2019 to Arvind Sawant who contested as a Shiv Sena (undivided) candidate on both occasions.

While admitting that his decision to part ways with Congress is deeply emotional, Deora stated that he aspired to collaborate with a leader who values constructive ideas, acknowledges his credentials and aims to leverage his abilities in Parliament for the progress of the nation and state.

"Eknath Shinde ji believes in my potential and embodies the belief that hard work can achieve the impossible," he stated.Without taking names, Deora criticised the Congress for its strong criticism of the Adani Group in recent years.

"The party that once initiated the country's economic liberalisation now targets business houses as 'anti-national.' It has strayed from celebrating the country's diverse cultures and religions, fostering a division based on caste and creating a North-South divide. It has deviated from its ideological and organisational roots," he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Malayalam film music director KJ Joy dead

T'puram, 15 Jan

Well-known Malayalam music director KJ Joy died on Monday at his residence in Chennai, film industry sources said. He was 77 years old. Joy, known as the first 'techno musician' in the Malayalam film music world for his use of instruments like the keyboard in the 1970s, had been bedridden for some time following a stroke, the sources said. His funeral will be held in Chennai on Wednesday, they said. Joy, born in 1946 at Nellikunnu in Thrissur district of Kerala, composed music for more than two hundred films during his decades long career. He made his debut in the Malayalam cinema in 1975 and since then he was the architect of many songs that captivated and enthralled people. It was Joy's experiments that led to a drastic change in the Malayalam film music scene and he also gained attention for his music direction in films starring Jayan. He also composed many eternal youth songs, including the very hit song 'En Swaram Poovittum Ganame', that people cherish to this day. —*PTI*

Man expecting girl child kills newborn son in MP

BETUL, 15 JAN

A man allegedly killed his 12-day-old son in an inebriated state in Madhya Pradesh's Betul district, police said on Monday. On interrogation, the accused said he had hoped to have a daughter as he already had two sons. The incident occurred in Bajjarwada village under Kotwali police station limits on Sunday evening. Investigations revealed that the accused, Anil Uikey, was inebriated when he beat up his wife and snatched their son from her. Scared of being beaten up further, the wife fled the spot and later found the baby dead inside their hut. The baby was found with strangulation marks on its neck inside their hut, Kotwali police station in-charge Ashish Singh Pawar said. A first information report (FIR) was registered against Uikey under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and he was placed under arrest, he said —*PTI*

Thieves' robbery attempt sparks fire, Rs 21L burnt in ATM

THANE, 15 JAN

An ATM of a nationalised bank located in Vishnu Nagar area in Maharashtra's Thane district caught fire and burned Rs 21,11,800 stored cash as thieves with a gas cutter tried to rob it, police said on Monday. "Unidentified people broke open the lock of the shutter to enter the ATM kiosk between 1am and 2am on January 13. They used a gas cutter to open the ATM. However, the intense heat generated during the process caused a fire. Based on the details provided by the Electronic Payment Systems official responsible for managing the ATM centre," the official said. —*PTI*

3 workers die in molten metal spill at steel plant

BHUJ, 15 JAN

Three workers who were critically injured when molten metal fell on them at a steel factory in Gujarat's Kutch district succumbed to their injuries during treatment, police said on Monday. Another worker is in critical condition, while the three other injured workers were discharged after treatment from a hospital at Gandhidham the official said. The incident occurred on Sunday at the steel factory in Anjar town when molten metal spilled out of the furnace and fell on some workers during work. A total of seven workers were injured. They were rushed to a hospital at Gandhidham. —*PTI*

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

More than 12 lakh devotees take holy dip at Sangam on Makar Sankranti on Monday; An elderly woman performs rituals near the 'meji' as part of Magh Bihu celebrations in Assam; A pilgrim blows a horn after taking a holy bath at Sagar Island on the occasion of 'Makar Sankranti' during Gangasagar Mela, in South 24 Parganas of West Bengal; Women cook rice during celebrations of harvest festival Pongal, at Dharavi in Mumbai ***PHOTOS: PTI***

Flyer hits pilot over flight delay, arrested

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

A passenger on an IndiGo flight was arrested after he assaulted a pilot when he was making an announcement regarding a delay in takeoff at the Delhi airport, police said on Monday.

A purported video of the incident, which took place Sunday, surfaced on social media and showed Sahil Katariya hitting the pilot as he was making the announcement inside the aircraft, which was bound for Goa.

The flight took off from Delhi at 6 pm after a delay of more than 10 hours, according to flight tracking website flightradar24.

The incident happened on a day dense fog majorly impacted operations at the Delhi airport leading to many flights being diverted, cancelled or delayed.

Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said unruly passenger behaviour is unacceptable and "will be dealt with strongly" in line with existing legal provisions.

According to him, aviation regulator DGCA will issue an SOP (standard operating procedure) for airlines on better communication and facilitation of passengers to minimise discomfort in view of flight cancellations and delays due to adverse weather.

A passenger hits a pilot when he was making an announcement on a delay in take-off at the Delhi airport on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

In a statement, the airline said a passenger "assaulted" the co-pilot and that the matter had been referred to an independent internal committee for his inclusion in the "no-fly list".

In the short video clip of the incident inside the aircraft, other crew members could be seen shouting at Katariya, in a yellow jacket, after he hit the pilot.

Katariya could be heard saying that they had been sitting in the plane for long and that they should be allowed to deboard if it was not taking off.

In another video clip, Katariya was seen being taken out of the aircraft by security personnel even as he apologised for his conduct.

He was then taken to a police station and later arrested.

According to the police, the co-pilot of flight number 6E 2175, between Delhi and Goa, and other security personnel gave a complaint regarding one passenger assaulting and misbehaving with them in the flight. Katariya misbehaved and hit co-pilot Anup Kumar and created nuisance inside the aircraft, the complaint stated.

The passenger was agitated as the flight was delayed for several hours, police said.

In its statement, IndiGo said the passenger was declared unruly and handed over to the local law enforcement agencies for further action as per protocol.

According to the airline, the incident is being referred to the independent internal committee for appropriate action and inclusion of the passenger on the 'no-fly list' as laid down in regulatory guidelines. In a post on X, Scindia said all stakeholders were working round the clock to minimise fog-related impact. —*PTI*

Doctor fined Rs 5L for 2-finger test on minor

SHIMLA, 15 JAN

Himachal Pradesh High Court has castigated doctors at the Palampur Civil Hospital for subjecting a minor rape survivor to the two-finger test. It directed the state government to pay a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the child after recovering the amount from the erring doctors.

Holding that the Medico-legal Case (MLC) report in the child rape case was "demeaning", a division bench of the high court comprising Justices Tarlok Singh Chauhan and Satyen Vaidya also asked the government to hold an inquiry against the doctors who examined the survivor to fix responsibility.

- It also directed all medical professionals from carrying out such a test

The court observed that the MLC was "self-incriminating, self-inculpatory and hitting the privacy of minor rape survivor" and slammed the doctors for conducting the two-finger test despite such an examination being held as violative of the right of the survivor, her physical and mental integrity.

It also directed all medical professionals from carrying out such a test and warned doctors conducting such a test would be liable to prosecution.

The court said the "gross insensitivity" shown by all those who designed the MLC cannot go unnoticed and held the proforma designed by the hospital as "bad in law" as it ignored section 53 A of the Indian Evidence Act and also violated the guidelines and protocol issued by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for health professionals dealing with survivors of sexual violence.

The Court had summoned the Secretary(Health) of the state, who was unable to justify the proforma issued by the hospital, and said it was designed by some of the doctors and has been withdrawn immediately. —PTI

NCB busts drug racket in Ker, 7 held

KOCHI, 15 JAN

Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has arrested seven drug traffickers after dismantling a network that was supplying a LSDin Ernakulam districton Monday.

LSD is a dangerous hallucinogenic chemical drug,

According to officials, NCB Cochin intercepted a postal parcel from Germany containing 10 blots (0.24 gm) of LSD. The recipient of the parcel, Sarath Parackal Jayand, a 24-year-old resident of Chengamanad near

PHOTO: PTI

Aluva, was subsequently arrested. Further investigation led to multiple follow-up actions, resulting in the overall seizure of 326 blots of LSD (7.59 gm), exceeding the commercial quantity by 76 times, and 8.25 gm of Hashish from six different locations in Ernakulam.

NCB said that seven drug traffickers, including Jayand, Abin Babu, Sharun Shaji, Ambady K P, Akshay C R, Anandakrishna Tebi, and Antony Sanjay K G, are currently in judicial custody.

According to the NCB, the network members pooled money from customers, converted funds into cryptocurrencies, and placed multiple orders for LSD with various vendors on illegal darknet drug markets. —*PTI*

Lanka arrests 10 fishermen

Colombo, 15 Jan

The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested 10 Indian fishermen and seized their trawler for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters, an official statement said on Monday. This comes two days after 12 fishermen from India were apprehended on similar charges.

The fishermen were arrested, and their trawler seized on Sunday north of Point Pedro, Jaffna, the Sri Lanka Navy said in a press release.

The ten apprehended fishermen were escorted to the Kankesanthurai harbour and will be handed over to the Mailadi Fisheries Inspector for further action, it said.

PHOTO: X

On Saturday, as many as 12 Indian fishermen were arrested, and their three trawlers seized for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters.

The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters.

The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries.

There have been periodic instances of Indian fishermen being arrested by Sri Lankan authorities for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line and fishing in Sri Lankan waters.

In 2023, the island nation's Navy arrested 240 Indian fishermen along with 35 trawlers for poaching in Sri Lankan waters. —*PTI*

Sachin Tendulkar ***PHOTO: PTI***

SACHIN TENDULKAR LATEST VICTIM OF DEEPFAKE VIDEO

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Iconic cricketer Sachin Tendulkar on Monday dismissed as "fake" the video in which he is seen promoting a gaming application that lures users for easy money.

The video shows Tendulkar talking about the merits of the application, saying he did not know that money making has become so easy and that his own daughter uses the platform.

Tendulkar, one of the best cricketers to have graced the game of cricket, posted the video along with a message in which he expressed concern about misuse of technology.

"These videos are fake. It is disturbing to see rampant misuse of technology. Request everyone to report videos, ads & apps like these in large numbers," Tendulkar, 50, posted on social media platform X.

The voice used in the video matches Tendulkar's. —*PTI*

UP man killed over Ayodhya donations

UNNAO, 15 JAN

A 35-year-old man was killed after being allegedly attacked while he was collecting donations for a temple here to organise a programme on 22 January. It is the day of the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Family members alleged that it was a communal incident because the attackers were from another community, however, police denied that the dispute was on religious grounds.

Additional Superintendent of Police Akhilesh Singh said around 11 am on Sunday, two people were injured in a fight in Champapurwa.

Based on a complaint, an FIR was registered at the Gangaghat police station against Kale Khan and his associates, he said and added that one of the injured, Vinod Kashyap, died during treatment.

Kale, Chhotu Khan, Suhail and Jamshed have been detained,.

Citing the FIR registered on the complaint from Kashyap's wife, Superintendent Police (SP) Siddharth Shankar Meena

PHOTO: FREEPIK

- Family members alleged that it was a communal incident because the attackers were from another community.

denied dispute on religious grounds.

While talking to reporters, the victim's family members claimed that Kashyap and his brother were attacked in Gangaghat Kotwali when they were collecting donations for the temple here to organise a programme on January 22 to mark the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. —*PTI*

NOW NO YOUTUBE VIDEOS AGAINST MAHESHWARI

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

The Delhi High Court on Monday restrained Vikash Kotnala, the YouTube channel partner of entrepreneur Vivek Bindra, from posting defamatory videos or any other material against motivational speaker Sandeep Maheshwari.

In an interim order, Justice Prateek Jalan said prima facie there was a link between Kotnala and Bindra, also a motivational speaker, and Kotnala's videos amount to circumventing a Faridabad civil court's order passed last month that restrained both Maheshwari and Bindra from posting defamatory material against each other.

On 22 December, 2023, a civil court in Haryana's Faridabad had said in order to preserve the peace, both the parties (Bindra and Maheshwari) were restrained from uploading any defamatory/ disparaging video on social media or any other online or offline mode against each other. The case, filed by Bindra against Maheshwari, is listed before the Faridabad court on Tuesday. —*PTI*

Goa court extends police custody of Suchana Seth by five days

PANAJI, 15 JAN

A Goa court on Monday extended by another five days the police custody of startup CEO Suchana Seth being investigated for allegedly killing her four-year-old son.

Seth was produced before Goa Children's Court after her initial remand of six days expired. Calangute Police sought the extension of her custody stating the investigation is yet to conclude.

Suchana being brought to a court in Goa ***PHOTO: PTI***

Seth, 39,was arrested from Chitradurga in Karnataka on January 8 while she was travelling in the taxi with her son's body stuffed in a bag and brought to Goa. A court in Mapusa town remanded her in police custody for six days.

She is accused of killing the child in a Candolim-based service apartment in Goa. A senior police officer told PTI on Monday that the accused is not cooperating with investigators. —*PTI*

GYANPEETH AWARDEE

Urdu poet Munawwar Rana dead

LUCKNOW, 14 JAN

Renowned poet Munawwar Rana passed away at the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences here on Sunday. He was 71 years old. He was suffering from throat cancer for a long time.

Rana's daughter Sumaiya Rana told PTI that her father died at the hospital late on Sunday night and will be laid to rest on Monday.

The poet is survived by his wife, four daughters and a son.

Munawwar Rana ***PHOTO: X***

"He was hospitalised for 14 to 15 days due to illness. He was first admitted to Medanta in Lucknow and then to SGPGI where he breathed his last around 11 pm today," Rana's son His son Tabrez Rana told PTI.

Born in 1952 in Rae Bareli, Munawwar Rana was awarded the Gyanpeeth Award in 2014. His use of simple words in the poems made his works popular among the common people.

Rana's poem 'Maa', which is considered one of his most famous works, has a special place in the world of Urdu literature.

Sharing a couplet from Rana's poem, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav, in a post on X, condoled the poet's demise.

"The demise of the country's renowned poet Munawwar Rana ji is extremely heart-wrenching. Wishing peace to the departed soul. Heartfelt tribute," Yadav wrote.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday condoled the death of noted poet Rana, and said he made rich contributions to Urdu literature and poetry.

He said on X, "Pained by the passing away of Shri Munawwar Rana Ji. He made rich contributions to Urdu literature and poetry. Condolences to his family and admirers. May his soul rest in peace." —*PTI*

CBI books Lt Col in corruption case

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

CBI has slapped a fresh case of corruption against Lieutenant Colonel Abhishek Chandra, the then SSO (contract and victualling) at Andaman and Nicobar Command. The case is for allegedly amassing disproportionate assets and depositing cash in lakhs in accounts of his family members, officials said on Monday.

Lieutenant Colonel Chandra was booked in 2022 for allegedly demanding and accepting illegal gratification from various vendors in cash as well as bank deposits in the accounts of his family members, they said.

PHOTO: PTI

During the probe, the agency scrutinised documents related to his assets which indicated that Chandra and his wife were in possession of assets which they could not satisfactorily account for, the officials said."Over Rs 15 lakh was deposited by Chandra and his wife Priya Chandra in cash from Port Blair through cash deposit vouchers in the account of Sashi Sharma (mother of Priya), Paritosh Sharma (brother of Priya) and also in the bank account of himself, his father Suresh Chandra and his minor sons," the agency has alleged. The Central Bureau of Investigation said that the deposits were made during the period 2017 and 2019 which Chandras could not satisfactorily account for the source of these cash amounts deposited by them from Port Blair in the bank accounts. —*PTI*

- Chandra was booked in 2022 for taking illegal gratification

BLANKET OF SNOW

Snow covered vehicles sit in a rental car parking lot at the O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, Sunday
PHOTO: REUTERS

Will Rahul's 6,700km yatra bring 'Nyay' in Manipur?

Rahul Gandhi's march is aimed at demanding economic, social and political justice for the masses ***PHOTO: BBC***

With just months left for India's general election, Rahul Gandhi, a senior leader of the opposition Congress party, has embarked on a 6,700km (4,163 miles)-long march across the country.

It comes nearly a year after Gandhi wrapped up a 4,000km-long "unity march" in which he travelled from the country's southern tip in Kanyakumari to Srinagar in Indian-administered Kashmir in the north.

The journey this time would see him travel from east to west, by bus and on foot. He plans to cover 100 parliamentary constituencies across 110 districts in 15 states, many of them electorally crucial, and finish in Mumbai in 66 days.

On Sunday, Congress flags fluttered in the air as Mr Gandhi addressed a rally that kicked off his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra (United India Justice March) in Imphal city, capital of the north-eastern state of Manipur.

Over the past eight months, Manipur has witnessed violent ethnic clashes between its majority Meitei and minority Kuki communities.

More than 200 people have been killed and thousands of families displaced by violence.

But on the sunny afternoon, thousands of women cheered as top Congress leaders addressed the crowd amid massive security presence. Among them was Waikhom Ibemma Devi, who reflected on the tough life in the state. "Whenever I go to a relief camp, I feel sad looking at the victims," she said.

"We understand the pain the people of Manipur have been through. And we promise you, we commit to you, that we will bring back what you valued," Gandhi told the gathering.

Many analysts and Congress supporters such as Tehseen Poonawala say last year's unity march had burnished Gandhi's political image, "recharged party workers and gave the Congress organisation, often criticised for being lethargic, a shakeup".

They expect the current campaign - aimed at demanding economic, social and political justice for the masses - to do the same.But journalist and author Neerja Chowdhury says "people like it when politicians come to them to listen but whether this makes a difference to the party's prospects in the elections is debatable".

The march comes as the opposition faces the challenge of preventing the widely popular Prime Minister Narendra Modi from scoring his third consecutive victory.

A recent survey has predicted he will retain power.

"As the battle for 2024 begins in earnest, the incumbent BJP [Bharaitya Janata Party] undeniably maintains the upper hand," said Milan Vaishnav, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The BJP has long painted Gandhi as a non-serious politician born into privilege. Last week, senior party leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said, "Rahul Gandhi is not taken seriously in our country."

Following the Congress' recent losses in three state elections, the BJP now rules 12 of 28 states in India with coalition governments in three. The Congress, which ruled India for decades after independence in 1947, has been reduced to three states.The opposition says that under Modi's 10-year leadership, there's been a backslide in democracy and civil liberties, misuse of federal investigative agencies, bulldozing of government institutions and a proliferation of a culture of hate and violence against the minorities and marginalised communities - allegations the government strongly denies.

The recent suspension of nearly 150 opposition MPs over their demand for a government statement on a parliament security breach has further strained relations between the two sides.

In such a politically charged environment, it's no surprise that some, including former Congress spokesperson Sanjay Jha, are calling the next elections a "do or die situation" for the opposition.

The party believes that Gandhi's justice march and the choice of strife-torn Manipur to kick off the campaign will help them gain public and media attention.The violent conflict in the tiny state, which has long been on the fringes of Indian politics, made headlines and sparked global outrage in July when a video showed two naked women being paraded and molested by a mob.

Prime Minister Modi condemned the incident as "shameful".But the Congress has repeatedly criticised Modi for failing to curb the continuing violence and not visiting the state. And Sunday was no exception. *—BBC News*

LETTERS

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SALAR سالار

AI to affect 40% of jobs and worsen inequality: IMF

The IMF said AI is likely to affect a greater proportion of jobs - put at around 60 per cent ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

Artificial intelligence is set to affect nearly 40 per cent of all jobs, according to a new analysis by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

IMF's managing director Kristalina Georgieva says "in most scenarios, AI will likely worsen overall inequality".

Georgieva adds that policy-makers should address the "troubling trend" to "prevent the technology from further stoking social tensions".

The proliferation of AI has put its benefits and risks under the spotlight.

The IMF said AI is likely to affect a greater proportion of jobs - put at around 60 per cent - in advanced economies. In half of these instances, workers can expect to benefit from the integration of AI, which will enhance their productivity.

In other instances, AI will have the ability to perform key tasks that are currently executed by humans. This could lower demand for labour, affecting wages and even eradicating jobs.

Meanwhile, the IMF projects that the technology will affect just 26 per cent of jobs in low-income countries.

It echoes a report from Goldman Sachs in 2023, which estimated AI could replace the equivalent of 300 million full-time jobs - but said there may also be new jobs alongside a boom in productivity.

Meanwhile, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said in November people should not be worried about the impact of AI on jobs at all, because reforms to education reforms would boost skills.

Georgieva said "many of these countries don't have the infrastructure or skilled workforces to harness the benefits of AI, raising the risk that over time the technology could worsen inequality among nations".

> In other instances, AI will have the ability to perform key tasks that are currently executed by humans. This could lower demand for labour, affecting wages and even eradicating jobs. Lower-income and older workers could fall behind

Our fingerprints may not be unique, claims AI

Young people turning to AI therapist bots

More generally, higher-income and younger workers may see a disproportionate increase in their wages after adopting AI.

Lower-income and older workers could fall behind, the IMF believes.

"It is crucial for countries to establish comprehensive social safety nets and offer retraining programmes for vulnerable workers," Ms Georgieva said. "In doing so, we can make the AI transition more inclusive, protecting livelihoods and curbing inequality."

The IMF analysis comes as global business and political leaders gather at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

AI is a topic of discussion, following the surge in popularity of applications like ChatGPT.

The technology is facing increased regulation around the world. Last month, European Union officials reached a provisional deal on the world's first comprehensive laws to regulate the use of AI.

The European Parliament will vote on the AI Act proposals early this year, but any legislation will not take effect until at least 2025.

The US, UK and China have yet to publish their own AI guidelines. *—BBC News*

AI will have the ability to perform key tasks that are currently executed by humans ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

Art of philately helping people combat everyday stress

People often say that philately, or collection of stamps is a great stress buster for them ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

When Bengaluru-based paediatrician Ashish S Mallige ticked off Antarctica from his bucket list, his obsession for the continent took another turn. He became an obsessive collector of philatelic material. Mallige, who served as a medical officer for the 39th Indian Scientific Expedition between 2019 and 2021, says it all began with the red box called 'Dakshin Gangotri Post Office'. "I was fascinated by it and purchased its first-day cover (FDC) as a souvenir, beginning my philatelic journey," adds Mallige.

Within couple of years, he managed to collect enough material for a five-frame exhibit for the Karnapex 2024, Karnataka Postal Circle's state-wide philatelic exhibition that was held in Bengaluru recently. "I have nothing rare from Antarctica, but my storytelling got me a silver award. Now, I cannot wait to collect rare philatelic material and participate in national-level competitions," says Mallige.

Although philately is considered a dying hobby, once bitten by the bug, philatelists seem to be more than willing to give their time and money to it. When speaking to them, one often hears that philately is a great stress-buster. Entrepreneur Sushil Mehra, who has been collecting stamps for 50 years now and has won many awards – which include a gold and large vermeil at Karnapex 2024 for his Bengaluru picture postcards and decimals respectively – says he keeps his collection at his office and spends one to two hours every day organising it. "It is the best thing to do when I want to sort my mind," says Mehra.

Intensive care physician Pradeep Rangappa, whose Red Cross collection won a gold at Karnapex 2024, says philately helps him deal with his highly stressful job. "What's more, it has given me an understanding of the geo-political dimensions of healthcare policy making. Through stamps it is easy to figure out which disease burden each country is paying attention to – Syria, for instance, has issued many stamps on anti-smoking over the years," says Rangappa.

Philatelist and farmer, 52-year-old Daniel Monteiro from Kumbaragode village in Udupi district, who started collecting stamps when he was in Class 5, says it was his fascination for peacocks that finally helped him find his focus – birds – and win awards at international level. "My most prized possession is an 1854 stamp, a swan issued by Australia. But my most interesting take away from being a collector is that the peacock may be our national bird, but India has issued far less stamps – about five – than other countries. But I have eight stamps on peacocks from China," says Monteiro. Incidentally, his peacocks fetched him a silver at Karnapex 2024.

Thanks to philately, Mangalore-based Vidya Kishore Baglodi, whose collection of augmented reality (AR)-enabled postcards got a special mention at Karnapex 2024, is a treasure trove of 'did you know…' nuggets. "Did you know that it is possible only to make a one-frame exhibit with popular topics as cricket or Lord Ram? Or that yoga has more stamps issued outside of India?" says Balgodi.For 50-year-old textile businessman from Udupi, Nagendra Mayak Ammunje, whose extensive collection pertaining to climate change fetches him an award at every competition he participates – at Karnapex 2024, he won a silver for it – these intriguing bits and pieces of information one encounters while researching is one of the biggest draws of philately. "If I hadn't started collecting stamps, I would never have found out about the tin can mail system in Tonga (a tiny island near Fiji), for instance. Until the 1940s, people there used to put their mails in sealed tin cans and float them into the sea, as there were no beaches for boats to dock. These were then picked up by passing ships. With philately, general knowledge will certainly grow in leaps and bounds," says Ammunje.

> Although philately is considered a dying hobby, once bitten by the bug, philatelists seem to be more than willing to give their time and money to it

This is partly the reason why retired postal department employee, Bharathi Kumaraswamy says she is encouraging her school going grandson Anirudh Ravinder to pursue philately. Kumaraswamy says she started collecting in the 1980s, but was not organised about it. It was after her retirement in 2021 that she started to claim her place among serious philatelists. "My first medal came in 2019, when I participated in a postal-employees-only exhibition. I won a bronze. After that I started to organise my collection into themes," says Kumaraswamy. At the Karnapex 2024, her submission on yoga got a bronze and the Himalayas a large silver. "The jury now advises me to add more rare material, like the stamp issued by China on BKS Iyengar," says Kumaraswamy. But she finds it difficult to obtain rare stamps, as she sources from family and friends.

Women philatelists especially will tend to hit this wall often, agrees Baglodi. She says she conducts philatelic workshops on behalf of India Post and has often come across women struggling to find rare material. "Men find it comparatively easier, as they have formed a very strong network among themselves and it is not easy for women to break into it," says Baglodi. Getting the right material is the biggest challenge for philatelists, says Mehra. He says things were a lot simpler when they had only books for research."These days plenty of information is available on social media, but it is not always true, and one has to be careful. My thumb rule is 'don't trust online sources, verify them'," says Mehra. *—PTI*

100K Afghan children are in dire need of support: UNICEF

ISLAMABAD, 15 JAN

Almost 1,00,000 children in Afghanistan are in dire need of support, three months after earthquakes devastated the country's west, the UN children's agency said Monday.

A 6.3-magnitude earthquake shook Herat province on 7 October and a second strong quake struck the same province days later, on 11 October, killing more than 1,000 people. The majority of those dead in the quakes in Zinda Jan and Injil districts were women and children, and 21,000 homes were destroyed, UNICEF said in a statement.

"The atmosphere in these villages is thick with suffering even 100 days after the earthquakes in western Afghanistan when families lost absolutely everything," said Fran Equiza, UNICEF representative in Afghanistan. "Children are still trying to cope with the loss and trauma. Schools and health centres, which children depend upon, are damaged beyond repair, or destroyed completely," he added.

"As if this was not enough, winter has taken hold and temperatures hover below freezing," Equiza said. "Children and families without homes live in life-threatening conditions at night, with no way to heat their temporary shelters."

UNICEF said it urgently needs

1.4 billion in 2024 to meet the humanitarian and basic needs of 19.4 million Afghans, half of the population.

The Taliban's failure to invest in public services has contributed to the deterioration of basic services, hindering the ability of vulnerable communities to recover from shocks and build resilience, the agency added..

"We are grateful to our donor partners who mobilised resources quickly, enabling UNICEF to respond within days to the urgent needs of children and their families in Herat," Equiza said.

But more help is needed "to ensure that children not only survive the winter but have a chance to thrive in the months and years to come," he added. Daniel Timme, head of communications for UNICEF in Afghanistan, said schools, homes, health facilities and water systems were destroyed.

"We have money coming in but it's not enough. These communities need to be independent again. It's not enough to put out the fire. We need to make it (Afghanistan) more resilient," Timme said.

Separately and for all of Afghanistan, UNICEF said Monday that 23.3 million people, including 12.6 million children, are in need of humanitarian assistance" in 2024, "mainly due vto the residual impacts of a protracted conflict, extreme climate shocks and the country's severe economic decline."

—AP

The Taliban's failure to invest in public services has contributed to the deterioration of basic services **PHOTO: AP**

PHOTO: AP

Bernardo Arevalo sworn in as Guatemala's Prez

GUATEMALA CITY, 15 JAN

Bernardo Arevalo was sworn in as Guatemala's president on Monday minutes after midnight despite months of efforts to derail his inauguration, including foot-dragging and rising tensions right up until the transfer of power. Arevalo arrives in the presidency after winning August's elections by a comfortable margin. But nothing has been straightforward since, with Attorney General Consuelo Porras and the establishment forces observers say she represents throwing one legal challenge after another at Arevalo and his party. The inauguration process dragged for hours into the night before he took the oath of office just past midnight. *—AP*

Iceland volcano eruption sees lava reach town

REYKJAVÍK, 15 JAN

Houses have been set on fire in the Icelandic town of Grindavik after two volcanic fissures opened nearby. A volcano on the Reykjanes peninsula erupted in the early hours of Sunday, spilling lava into the fishing town. The eruption is proving to be "the worst case scenario" according to one expert, with the entire population of the town being evacuated. Defences built after an eruption in December have partially contained the lava, but some have been breached. The main road into the town has been cut off by the flow of lava. *—ANI*

Brazil commissions 2nd Scorpene-class submarine Humaita

RIO DE JANEIRO, 15 JAN

The Brazilian Navy commissioned the second of the four Scorpene submarines of the ProSub program, Humaita at the Itaguai Naval base in Rio de Janeiro. The Humaita has notably been built entirely in Brazil by Itaguai Construcoes Navais (ICN) , an official press release of the Naval Group said. The scorpene-class submarine was commissioned in the presence of Jose Mucio Monteiro, Brazilian Minister of Defence and Emmanuel Chiva, French General Delegate for Armaments on 12 January. After the Humaita's sea trials were successfully completed, it was transported and put into use by the Brazilian Navy. *—ANI*

Taiwan detects 6 Chinese aircraft near island

TAIPEI CITY, 15 JAN

Taiwan detected six Chinese military aircraft and four naval vessels around the nation between 6 am on 14 January) and 6 am on 15 January, Taiwan News reported on Monday citing the country's Ministry of National Defence (MND). According to the MND, one BZK-005 reconnaissance drone from the six People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft crossed the Taiwan Strait median line and reached the southwest corner of the nation's air defence identification zone (ADIZ). Taiwan responded by monitoring the PLA operations with planes, naval boats, and air defence missile systems. *—AP*

Houthi rebels fire missile at US warship in Red Sea

For the 1st time US acknowledges being attacked by rebels

DUBAI, 15 JAN

Yemen's Houthi rebels fired an anti-ship cruise missile toward an American destroyer in the Red Sea on Sunday, but a US fighter jet shot it down in the latest attack roiling global shipping amid Israel's war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, officials said.

The attack marks the first US-acknowledged fire by the Houthis since America and allied nations began strikes Friday on the rebels following weeks of assaults on shipping in the Red Sea.

The Houthis have targeted that crucial corridor linking Asian and Mideast energy and cargo shipments to the Suez Canal onward to Europe over the Israel-Hamas war, attacks that threaten to widen that conflict into a regional conflagration.

The Houthis, a Shiite rebel group allied with Iran that seized Yemen's capital in 2014, did not immediately acknowledge the attack. It wasn't immediately clear whether the US would retaliate for the latest attack, though President Joe Biden has said he "will not hesitate to direct further measures to protect our people and the free flow of international commerce as necessary."

The attack marks the first US-acknowledged fire by the Houthis since America and allied nations began strikes Friday on the rebels following weeks of assaults on shipping **PHOTO: AP**

The Houthi fire on Sunday went in the direction of the USS Laboon, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer operating in the southern reaches of the Red Sea, the US military's Central Command said in a statement.

The missile came from near Hodeida, a Red Sea port city long held by the Houthis, the US said. "An anti-ship cruise missile was fired from Iranian-backed Houthi militant areas of Yemen toward USS Laboon," Central Command said. "There were no injuries or damage reported." *—AP*

UN seeks $4.2B to aid war-hit Ukraine, refugees in 2024

BERLIN, 15 JAN

The United Nations appealed on Monday for $4.2 billion to help people in Ukraine and displaced outside the country this year, saying that people on the front lines have "exhausted their meagre resources" and many refugees also are vulnerable.

About three-quarters of the total, $3.1 billion, is meant to support some 8.5 million people inside Ukraine.

The remaining $1.1 billion is sought for refugees and host communities outside Ukraine. A recent wave of attacks "underscores the devastating civilian cost of the war" and a bitter winter is increasing the need for humanitarian aid, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the UN refugee agency said in a statement from Geneva.

"In front-line towns and villages, people have exhausted their meagre resources and rely on aid to survive," it said. Ukraine has been subjected to massive Russian barrages recently. More than 500 drones and missiles were fired between December 29 and 2 January, according to officials in Kyiv.

Nearly two years after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the UN says 14.6 million people in the country need humanitarian help, while around 6.3 million have fled Ukraine and remain refugees.

"Hundreds of thousands of children live in communities on the front lines of the war, terrified, traumatised and deprived of their basic needs. That fact alone should compel us to do everything we can to bring more humanitarian assistance to Ukraine," said Martin Griffiths, the UN's humanitarian chief.

"Homes, schools and hospitals are repeatedly hit, as are water, gas and power systems," he added. "The very fabric of society is under attack with devastating consequences."

—AP

About three-quarters of the total, $3.1 billion, is meant to support some 8.5 million people inside Ukraine **PHOTO: AP**

PROTEST IN SOLIDARITY

Supporters of Jamaat-e-Islami chant slogans during a protest against Israeli airstrikes and to show solidarity with Palestinian people living in Gaza, in Karachi, Pakistan on Monday **PHOTO: AP/PTI**

Africa's biggest oil refinery begins production

ABUJA, 15 JAN

Africa's biggest oil refinery has begun production in Nigeria, the company has said, ending a yearslong wait for a plant that analysts said Monday could boost refining capacity in a region heavily reliant on imported petroleum products.

The 19 billion facility, which has a capacity to produce 650,000 barrels per day, has started to produce diesel and aviation fuel, the Dangote Petroleum Refinery company reported Saturday. As Nigeria's first privately owned oil refinery, the project "is a game-changer for our country". Nigeria is one of Africa's top oil producers but imports refined petroleum products for its own use. *—AP*

'Ramaswamy won't be Trump's running mate'

WASHINGTON, 15 JAN

Donald Trump's top adviser has ruled out Vivek Ramaswamy as the ex-US president's running mate after the Republican frontrunner publicly criticised the Indian-American presidential candidate ahead of the Iowa caucus.

The Iowa caucuses, which begin on Monday, formally kick off the beginning of the long process by which the Republicans and Democrats choose their nominees for the presidential election on 5 November. Trump's top adviser, Jason Miller, told the New York Post that voters could "probably" rule out 38-year-old biotech entrepreneur Ramaswamy as the ex-president's running mate. "Pretty safe to say it won't be Vivek," Miller was quoted as saying in the report.

On Saturday, Trump, 77, lashed out at Ramaswamy, who is most closely aligned with him in the race for the Republican nomination, accusing him of "deceitful campaign tricks".

The former president's criticism stemmed from shirts that Ramaswamy's campaign is handing out that say 'Save Trump, Vote Vivek' on them.

Ramaswamy posted a photo with a group of young men wearing them after his event in Rock Rapids, Iowa, on Saturday, which caught the former president's attention.

"Vivek started his campaign as a great supporter, the best President in generations,' etc. Unfortunately, now all he does is disguise his support in the form of deceitful campaign tricks," Trump wrote on Truth Social on Saturday.

"Very sly, but a vote for Vivek is a vote for the other side' don't get duped by this. Vote for TRUMP, don't waste your vote! Vivek is not MAGA," he added. The criticism marks the first time Trump and his team have made direct, public attacks against Ramaswamy.

Until now, Trump has largely avoided criticising Ramaswamy due to his strong praise and defence of the former president.

—PTI

Vivek Ramaswamy **PHOTO: PTI**

Not interested in being Vice Prez: Nikki Haley

WASHINGTON, 15 JAN

Indian-American senior Republican Party leader Nikki Haley, the lone woman in the party's Presidential Race, has said she is not interested in being the vice president, asserting that she's running to be the next US president and is contending "to win". Haley's remarks came ahead of the Iowa caucuses on Monday, which formally kicks off the beginning of the long process by which the Republicans and Democrats choose their nominees for the presidential election on 5 November. Replying to a question about how she felt about some voters saying they would prefer her as a vice president rather than a president, the 51-year-old former US Ambassador to the UN said, "I don't play for a second. I've never played for a second. "I'm not interested in being Vice President. I'm running to be president, and I'm running to win, and we will," the former South Carolina governor said in a CBS News interview. With the Republican contest to choose the nominee for the November 2024 presidential elections beginning on Monday with the Iowa caucus, former president Donald Trump, a front-runner among the party candidates, maintains a sizable lead over Haley, his nearest rival. *—PTI*

BANNED FROM TRAVELLING FOR 2 YEARS

Iran extends Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi's prison sentence

DUBAI, 15 JAN

A court in Iran has slapped imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi with an additional sentence of 15 months for allegedly spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic, her family said Monday.

According to a post on Instagram by Mohammadi's family, the new sentence was handed down on 19 December. It said Mohammadi had refused to attend the court sessions.

The verdict also said that after serving her time, Mohammadi would be banned from travelling abroad for two years and would be barred from membership in political and social groups and from having a mobile phone for the same duration.

The ruling also banishes her from the capital, Tehran, meaning she would likely have to serve the new sentence in another province in Iran. Mohammadi is held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison where she is serving a 30-month sentence for spreading propaganda against the ruling system, disobediences in prison and defamation of authorities.

The latest verdict reflects the Iranian theocracy's anger that she was awarded the Nobel Prize last October for years of activism despite a decadeslong government campaign targeting her.

The verdict also said that after serving her time, Mohammadi would be banned from travelling abroad for two years **PHOTO: AP**

Mohammadi is the 19th woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize and the second Iranian woman after human rights activist Shirin Ebadi in 2003. The 51-year-old Mohammadi has kept up her activism despite numerous arrests by Iranian authorities and spending years behind bars.

Earlier in November, Mohammadi went on hunger strike over being blocked along with other inmates from getting medical care and to protest the country's mandatory headscarves for women.

Mohammadi was a leading light for nationwide, women-led protests sparked by the death last year of a 22-year-old woman in police custody that have grown into one of the most intense challenges to Iran's theocratic government.

That woman, Mahsa Amini, had been detained for allegedly not wearing her headscarf to the liking of authorities. *—AP*

- Mohammadi is the 19th woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize and the second Iranian woman after human rights activist Shirin Ebadi in 2003. The 51-year-old Mohammadi has kept up her activism despite numerous arrests by Iranian authorities and spending years behind bars

Indonesia evacuates about 6.5K people after volcano spew

FLORES TIMUR, 15 JAN

Indonesia has evacuated about 6,500 people on the island of Flores after Mount Lewotobi Laki-laki volcano spewed thick clouds of brownish ash for the past days, authorities said on Monday.

No casualties or major damage have been reported so far. The eruptions in East Nusa Tenggara province are part of hot gas spills that have become more frequent in recent days. The 1,584-meter (5,197 foot) mountain is one of the "twin volcanoes" — the Lewotobi Laki-laki and Lewotobi Perempuan — in the Flores Timur district.

The volcano has erupted 40 times since Sunday, with columns of hot clouds rising 500-1,500 meters (1,600-4,900 feet) into the air. Residents in nearby villages were taken in by relatives or brought to evacuation centers as authorities raised the volcano's alert status to the highest level last Tuesday.

Officials urge the local community, as well as visitors and tourists, to stay away from a 4-kilometer (2.5-mile) radius around the eruption zone and be aware of the potential for cold lava surging into rivers upstream from the peak in case of intense rain.

Lewotobi Laki-laki is one of the 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, an archipelago of 270 million people. The country is prone to earthquakes and volcanic activity because it sits along the "Ring of Fire," a horseshoe-shaped series of seismic fault lines around the Pacific Ocean. *—AP*

Lewotobi Laki-laki **PHOTO: AP**

- The eruptions in East Nusa Tenggara province are part of hot gas spills that have become more frequent in recent days

'Global economic slowdown to be worst phase in 30 yrs'

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Global economic growth is estimated to fall to its lowest rate in three decades by 2030 amid the ongoing economic and geopolitical shocks, a new report said on Monday.

Releasing the Future of Growth Report 2024 here ahead of its annual meeting of world leaders, the World Economic Forum (WEF) said this downturn is exacerbating a range of interconnected global challenges, including the climate crisis and a weakening social contract, which are collectively reversing progress in global development.

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The report called for a new approach to economic growth that balances efficiency with long-term sustainability and equity, examining speed, and quality together.

Analysing the quality of growth across 107 economies, it found that high-income economies score high on innovation and inclusion, while lower-income economies on sustainability.

"Reigniting global growth will be essential to addressing key challenges, yet growth alone is not enough," WEF Managing Director Saadia Zahidi said. "The report proposes a new way for assessing economic growth that balances efficiency with long-term sustainability, resilience and equity, as well as innovation for the future, aligning with both global and national priorities," she added.

The WEF also launched its 'Future of Growth' initiative, a two-year endeavour aimed at charting a new narrative for economic growth and supporting policymakers from around the world, together with economists and other experts, in identifying the best pathways in balance growth, innovation, inclusion, sustainability, and resilience goals.

The report said that most countries continue to grow in ways that are neither sustainable nor inclusive and are limited in their ability to absorb or generate innovation and minimise their contribution and susceptibility to global shocks. *—PTI*

WEF also launched its 'Future of Growth' initiative ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

PHOTO: PTI

Gold rises ₹150; silver jumps ₹300

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Gold prices rose Rs 150 to Rs 63,550 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid strong cues in the overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities.In the previous trade, the precious metal settled at Rs 63,400 per 10 grams.Silver also jumped Rs 300 to Rs 76,700 per kilogram, while it had closed at Rs 76,400 per kg in the previous close."Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 63,550/10 grams, up by Rs 150, tracking positive cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, gold and silver were quoting higher at USD 2,055 per ounce and USD 23.20 per ounce, respectively.*—PTI*

Rupee rises 6 paise to settle at 82.89 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 15 JAN

The rupee strengthened for the ninth consecutive session to settle with a gain of 6 paise to 82.89 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, driven by a rally in the domestic equity markets.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the local currency opened at 82.82 and traded between 82.77 and 82.91 against the greenback during intra-day deals.The unit finally settled at 82.89 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 6 paise over its previous close amid a bullish trend in domestic equities, wherein benchmark indices climbed to lifetime highs.On Friday, the rupee settled with a gain of 6 paise to 82.95 against the US dollar.In the last nine trading sessions, the local unit added 48 paise since the level of 83.32 against the dollar recorded on 2 January. *—PTI*

HCL Tech shares jump over 5%; hit 52-week high

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹4,096 crore in the same period a year ago, HCL Tech said in a regulatory filing on Friday.The consolidated revenue of HCL Tech grew 6.5 per cent to ₹28,446 crore during the reported quarter from ₹26,700 crore in the year-ago period."Our results this quarter have been remarkably strong with a revenue growth of six per cent on quarter-on-quarter in constant currency, driven by strong momentum in services and software businesses."We delivered a stellar operating margin of 19.8 per cent, a 126 bps improvement quarter-on-quarter and 16 bps improvement year-on-year," HCL Tech CEO and Managing Director C Vijayakumar told reporters.The company has projected a revenue growth in the range of 5-5.5 per cent in the current fiscal on a year-on-year basis. *—PTI*

Volvo Car India hikes ICE vehicle prices by 2%

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Volvo Car India on Monday said it has increased prices of its conventional engine vehicles by 2 per cent but has kept the prices of its electric vehicles unchanged.

Following the price hike of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, the XC60 is now priced at Rs 68.9 lakh, the S90 at Rs 68.25 lakh and the XC90 at Rs 1,00,89,000, Volvo Car India said in a statement. Prices of EV offerings, XC40 Recharge and C40 Recharge remain unchanged at Rs 57.9 lakh and Rs 62.95 lakh respectively, it added."We are focused on sustainable luxury e-mobility and have committed that we will be an all-electric company by 2030. We encourage the adoption of EVs and have decided that as of now we will hold the prices of our EVs," Volvo Car India Managing Director Jyoti Malhotra said. *—PTI*

SENSEX JUMPS 759 POINTS TO CLOSE AT RECORD HIGH

Nifty scales 22,000 points mount on sharp gain in IT shares

MUMBAI, 15 JAN

Benchmark Sensex closed above the 73,000 level for the first time while broader Nifty scaled the 22,000-points peak on Monday as key stock indices stayed on the record-breaking run powered by a rally in IT shares, Reliance and HDFC Bank.

Rising for the fifth day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 759.49 points or 1.05 per cent to settle at a lifetime closing high of 73,327.94. During the day, it rallied 833.71 points or 1.14 per cent to hit an all-time intra-day peak of 73,402.16.

The Nifty climbed 202.90 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 22,097.45. During the day, it zoomed 221 points or 1 per cent to reach a lifetime intra-day high of 22,115.55.

A strong rally in IT shares Infosys, TCS, Wipro and HCL Tech after better than expected Q3 results helped the indices scale new record high levels. Oil & gas and energy sector shares also boosted the rally.

Among the Sensex firms, Wipro jumped over 6 per cent after the IT company's December quarter earnings beat estimates.

The other prominent gainers were HCL Technologies, HDFC Bank, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Bharti Airtel and Reliance Industries.

HCL Technologies on Friday reported a 6.2 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 4,350 crore, highest ever on a quarterly basis, in the three months ended December 2023 on the back of growth in both services and software businesses.

Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Motors, Tata Steel and Axis Bank were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled in the green while Hong Kong ended marginally lower. European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended on a muted note on Friday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.29 per cent to USD 78.06 a barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 340.05 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark zoomed 847.27 points or 1.18 per cent to settle at 72,568.45 on Friday. The Nifty climbed 247.35 points or 1.14 per cent to settle at 21,894.55. *—PTI*

The Nifty climbed 202.90 points or 0.93% to settle at a new closing high of 22,097.45 ***PHOTO: PTI***

- HCL Technologies on Friday reported a 6.2 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 4,350 crore, highest ever on a quarterly basis, in the three months ended December 2023 on the back of growth in both services and software businesses

Wholesale inflation rises to 0.73% in Dec

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

The wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation rose in December at 0.73 per cent mainly due to a sharp rise in food prices. The WPI inflation was in the negative zone from April to October and had turned positive in November at 0.26 per cent."

Positive rate of inflation in December 2023 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, machinery & equipment, other manufacturing, other transport equipment and computer, electronics & optical products etc," the commerce and industry ministry said in a statement on Monday.Food inflation rose to 9.38 per cent in December from 8.18 per cent in November 2023.

Inflation in vegetables was 26.30 per cent, while in pulses it was 19.60 per cent in December. Retail or consumer price based inflation print for December rose to a 4-month high of 5.69 per cent, as per data released last week.

The RBI in its bi-monthly monetary policy last month held interest rates steady and flagged risks of rising food inflation in November and December. *—PTI*

- The WPI inflation was in the negative zone from April to October and had turned positive in November at 0.26 per cent

The WPI inflation was in the negative zone from April to October ***PHOTO: PTI***

SEBI'S NEW GUIDELINES

AIFs required to hold their investments in demat form

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Capital markets regulator on Mondayguid put in place guidelines for Alternative Investment Funds pertaining to holding their investments in dematerialised form along with the appointment of custodian.

Under the latest guidelines, AIFs are required to hold their investments in dematerialised form, unless exempted by SEBI.

The new framework, effective from 1 October, 2024, mandates that any investment made by an AIF after this date must be held in dematerialised form, SEBI said in a circular. However, investments made before this date have been exempted except in cases where the investee company is legally required to facilitate dematerialisation or when the AIF, alone or with other SEBI registered entities, has control over the investee company.

SEBI also said investments made before 1 October, 2024, falling under these two conditions mentioned must be dematerialised by 31 January, 2025.

Further, there are exemptions for AIF schemes with tenures ending on or before Jan. 31, 2025, and those in extended tenure as of the circular's date. The sponsor or manager of an AIF is required to appoint a custodian registered with the board for the safekeeping of the AIF's securities.

A custodian, which is an associate of the sponsor or manager, can only act as a custodian under certain specified conditions.

Among the conditions include custodian for a scheme of an AIF must be appointed before the date of the scheme's first investment. Existing schemes of Category I and II AIFs, with a corpus of Rs 500 crore or less and holding at least one investment should appoint a custodian by 31 January, 2025. Under the rule, custodians are required to report or disclose information about AIF investments in the manner specified by SEBI.

The regulator said that Standard Setting Forum for AIFs, in collaboration with SEBI, will have to formulate implementation standards for reporting AIF investment data under custodianship. *—PTI*

The new framework, effective from 1 October, 2024 ***PHOTO: PTI***

India ranked 35th for leveraging future hopes

DAVOS, 15 JAN

India has been ranked 35th on a global index of countries best placed for leveraging future possibilities while the UK topped the list released here on Monday.

The Future Possibilities Index (FPI), a flagship global future trends study released by Newsweek Vantage and Horizon Group on sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, has Denmark, the US, the Netherlands and Germany in the top five after the UK.

Among large emerging markets, China is placed highest at 19th this year, followed by Brazil at 30th, India (35th) and South Africa. The study compared the factors that will help governments, investors and other private sector stakeholders leverage six global, transformational trends for growth and wellbeing across 70 countries.

These six global transformational trends are Exabyte Economy, Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero Economy, Circular Economy, BioGrowth Economy, and Experience Economy. *—PTI*

Restaurants seeks input tax credit, higher GST rate of 12%

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

The National Restaurant Association of India on Monday urged the government to restore input tax credit to restaurants while increasing the GST rate to 12 per cent from the current 5 per cent, ahead of the upcoming Union Budget.

In a letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) also called for an equitable and fair e-commerce policy, saying balanced policies and regulations are required to enable a level playing field, where platforms can continue to innovate, while restaurants, delivery partners and consumers are protected from potentially exploitative practices.

The restaurant industry was one of the sectors that suffered the most during the pandemic but showed great resilience to survive and has since been on a steady path of recovery. If the sector gets a certain amount of policy and budgetary support in the upcoming Budget, it will propel the sector towards an accelerated pace of growth, NRAI said in a statement.

Seeking restoration of GST input tax credit (ITC), the industry body said, "It is the only industry to be pegged at 5 per cent GST without the availability of ITC; a feature designed to avoid cascading taxation".

The lack of ITC not only reduces the operating margin of the business but also enhances the capital budget for a new project significantly. This increased project cost slows down the expansion plans, which massively impacts the overall growth of the sector, it added.

It further said, "We understand that it may create a compliance burden on the smaller businesses, and therefore, we feel that this can be done on revenue slabs. While restaurants below a certain revenue threshold can continue with the current GST provisions, the organised sector with higher revenues and capex outlay may move towards the proposed GST regime". *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

BOEING OPENS WAREHOUSING FACILITY IN UP

MUMBAI, 15 JAN

US aircraft maker Boeing on Monday announced the opening of a warehousing facility at Khurja in Uttar Pradesh for parts supply.

The 36,000-sq ft India Distribution Centre, being operated in collaboration with third-party logistics provider DB Schenker, will support regional aviation customers in maintaining higher fleet utilisation, the company said in a statement. "This centre will support the emergent needs of spare parts for Boeing aircraft in India, reducing lead times, improving availability, and supporting the MRO industry here," Boeing India President Salil Gupte said.

Boeing had announced its investment in the distribution centre during the Aero Show in Bengaluru early last year. The first batch of the parts from the facility were shipped to customers in December 2023, it said in the statement.

The aircraft maker said it continues to enhance customer service by growing its global distribution network, including investing in, and developing regional distribution centres.

"The India Distribution Centre represents another significant step forward in Boeing's strategy to provide parts and services when and where customers need them," William Ampofo, vice president for parts and distribution services and supply chain, Boeing Global Services, said. "The complexities of warehousing and logistics, combined with Boeing's distinctive needs, provided us with an opportunity to build an innovative setup that meets the distinct spares support requirements of India's growing aviation industry," said Kinjal Pande, chief executive officer at DB Schenker, Cluster India, and Indian Subcontinent. *—PTI*

Wipro shares jump 14% post Q3-earnings

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Shares of Wipro on Monday jumped nearly 14 per cent, adding Rs 18,168.68 crore to its market valuation, after the IT company's December quarter earnings beat estimates.

The stock zoomed 13.10 per cent to reach its 52-week high of Rs 526.45 on the BSE.

At the NSE, it rallied 13.65 per cent to Rs 529 -- its 52-week peak.

The company's market capitalisation (mcap) jumped Rs 18,168.68 crore to Rs 2,61,217.37 crore in early deals.

Other IT stocks -- Tech Mahindra, Infosys, HCL Technologies, and Tata Consultancy Services -- also saw frenzied buying.

The BSE Information Technology index traded nearly 2 per cent higher.

Benchmark equity indices hit record peaks in early trade on Monday, with the Sensex breaching the 73,000 milestone for the first time and the Nifty surging past the 22,000-mark, driven by a sharp rally in IT stocks.

IT company Wipro on Friday posted a nearly 12 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 2,694.2 crore in the December quarter amid a "cautious" demand environment and clients making conservative investments.

Vikas Jain, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities view the Wipro results as better-than-expected. *—PTI*

31 JAN DEADLINE

FASTags without KYC link to be defunct

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

To enhance efficiency of electronic toll collection system and provide seamless movement at toll plazas, NHAI has taken 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative that aims to discourage use of single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle, a company statement said.

NHAI is also encouraging FASTag users to complete 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) process of their latest FASTag by updating KYC as per RBI guidelines,it added.

To avoid inconvenience, the statement said users must ensure that KYC of their latest FASTag is completed. It added that FASTag users must also comply with 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' and discard all the earlier issued FASTags through their respective banks.

"Only the latest FASTag account shall remain active as previous tags will be deactivated/blacklisted after 31st January 2024," the statement said.

For further assistance or queries, FASTag users can reach out to nearest toll plazas or toll-free customer care number of their respective issuer banks.

The statement said NHAI has taken this initiative after recent reports of multiple FASTags being issued for a particular vehicle and FASTags being issued without KYC in violation of RBI's mandate.

Apart from this, FASTags are sometimes deliberately not fixed on the windscreen of the vehicle, resulting in unnecessary delays at toll plazas and causing inconvenience to fellow national highway users. The statement noted that 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative will help make toll operations more efficient and ensure seamless and comfortable journeys. *—PTI*

NHAI is also encouraging FASTag users to complete KYC ***PHOTO: ANI***

Vin cius scored his three goals in the first half as Madrid beat Barcelona to lift its first trophy of the season on Sunday. ***PHOTO: X/ REAL MADRID FC***

HALA MADRID! VINI TREBLE IN SUPER CUP WIN

Real Madrid beat Barcelona 4-1 to win

Vinicius Junior did his best Cristiano Ronaldo impression in Saudi Arabia, scoring a hat trick and leading Real Madrid to a 4-1 rout of Barcelona and the Spanish Super Cup trophy ***PHOTO: X/ REALMADRID FC***

RIYADH, 15 JAN

Vinicius Junior did his best Cristiano Ronaldo impression in Saudi Arabia, scoring a hat trick and leading Real Madrid to a 4-1 rout of Barcelona and the Spanish Super Cup trophy.

Vinicius scored his three goals in the first half as Madrid beat Barcelona to lift its first trophy of the season on Sunday. After his first goal, the Brazil forward imitated the trademark celebration of the former Madrid great, with Ronaldo reportedly at the Riyadh stadium.

"It was for Cris, because he is my idol and now he is playing here," said Vin cius, who was named the best player of the final. "I'm very happy with myself and with my team. It's not easy to play against Barcelona and to win 4-1 is tough. We played an almost perfect match."

Rodrygo also scored for Madrid, which now has 13 Super Cup trophies, one less than the Catalan club. It was Madrid's second Super Cup triumph since the tournament was moved to Saudi Arabia four years ago. Robert Lewandowski scored Barcelona's goal to make it 2-1 in the first half.

The "clasico" between the Spanish powerhouses was a rematch of last year's Super Cup final that Barcelona won 3-1 for its first trophy with coach Xavi Hern ndez and without Lionel Messi. Madrid had also won at Barcelona in the first "clasico" of the season in October in the Spanish league.

Barcelona played a man down from the 71st after defender Ronald Araujo was shown a second yellow card for a foul on Vin cius. Madrid was already winning 4-1 at the time. The victory added to Madrid's momentum as Carlo Ancelotti's team remains unbeaten in 21 consecutive games in all competitions. Its last setback was a 3-1 loss at Atletico Madrid in the Spanish league in September.

In contrast, the defeat adds to Barcelona's troubles and increases the pressure on Xavi, whose team hasn't played well recently. It trails second-place Madrid by seven points in the Spanish league, with Catalan opponent Girona another point ahead at the top having played an extra game. "We are disappointed and sad," Xavi said. "We didn't get off to a good start and were never comfortable. We have to congratulate Madrid because it deserved to win." *—AP*

Looking forward to play with Virat: Djokovic responds

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Tennis ace Novak Djokovic has responded to India's superstar batter Virat Kohli good luck wishes, ahead of the Serbian's first Grand Slam of the year, and said that he looks forward to the day they "play together." The two athletes have spoken about the mutual respect and admiration they have for each other and how their camaraderie was fostered by exchanging text messages with each other over the years. Djokovic took to social media platform X to respond to a video message posted by BCCI to thank Kohli for his "kind words." "Thank you for these kind words @imVkohli Looking forward to the day we play together," Djokovic tweeted. *—ANI*

Maninder stars in Bengal Warriors' win

JAIPUR, 15 JAN

Bengal Warriors rode on Maninder Singh's masterclass to defeat Bengaluru Bulls 35-29 in the 1000th Pro Kabaddi League match here on Monday. Maninder scored nine points, while defender Shubham Shinde secured seven tackle points. Bharat was the lone performer for the Bulls with 10 points on the night. Bengal Warriors now have 38 points from 13 matches to occupy sixth spot in the standings. Bengaluru on the other hand have slipped to ninth in the 12-team standings with 32 points. *—PTI*

BCCI invites application for one selector

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

BCCI on Monday invited applications to replace one among the five senior national selectors and in all likelihood, former pacer Salil Ankola would be the one on his way out as West Zone is already represented by chairman Ajit Agarkar. The BCCI posted an advertisement on its website listing the same requirements that have been in place for the past couple of years -- the incumbent should have played either 7 Tests or 30 first-class matches. Applications will also be considered if the candidate has an experience of 10 ODIs or 20 first-class matches. The last date of submitting applications is 25 January. The five-man selection committee comprises Agarkar (chairman, Mumbai, West Zone), S Sharath (Tamil Nadu, South Zone), SS Das (Vidarbha, Central Zone), Subroto Banerjee (Bengal, Bihar, East Zone) and Ankola (Mumbai, Maharashtra, West Zone). *—PTI*

Gold rush continues as Yogesh wins double

JAKARTA, 15 JAN

Indian shooters' gold rush continued in the Asia Olympic Qualifiers with Yogesh Singh winning the top prize in individual as well as team event of the men's 25m centre fire pistol competition here on Monday.

Yogesh claimed the individual gold medal after shooting 573, finishing ahead of silver winner Muad Al Balushi of Oman (570) and Indonesia's Anang Yulianto (567). The other two Indian participants in the event, Pankaj Yadav (567) and Akshay Jain (564), has ended fourth and sixth respectively. The Indian trio aggregated 1704 to bag the team gold ahead of shooters from Oman and Indonesia.

In the qualifiers for shotgun in Kuwait City, Commonwealth Games gold medallist Shreyasi Singh had to be content with a fifth-place finish in the final of women's trap, having managed 19 points. Shreyasi had qualified for the final in fourth position with a total of 115 across five rounds.

Taipei's Wan-Yu Liu (44) won the gold medal in women's trap and China's Xinqiu Zhang (39) settled for silver. Kazakhstan's Mariya Dmitriyenko (30) ended with bronze. The Indian trio of Shreyasi, Manisha Keer and Bhavya Tripathi, however, won the silver medal in the women's trap team event with a total of 328, finishing behind China and ahead of Kazakhstan.

Yogesh Singh and Lakshay Sheoran ***PHOTO: X***

Lakshay Sheoran wins bronze

Asian Games silver medallist Lakshay Sheoran won bronze in men's trap but missed one of the two available Paris 2024 Olympics quota places by a whisker in the Asia Olympic Qualifiers for shotgun here on Monday.

- Earlier in the day, Sheoran shot well to return two rounds of 24 each to total 119 after five 25-shot qualification rounds, to claim the fourth spot in the 57-strong field

Sheoran finished third despite leading the 50-shot final for most of it. 15-year-old Iranian Mohammad Beyranvand struck gold and the first quota place, getting the better of silver winning Chinese Guo Yuhaoa, the latter missing his second shoot-off shot after both had tied at 40 hits. Guo also collected the second quota place. Earlier in the day, Sheoran shot well to return two rounds of 24 each to total 119 after five 25-shot qualification rounds, to claim the fourth spot in the 57-strong field. *—PTI*

Israeli soccer player detained in Turkey

ANKARA, 15 JAN

Turkish authorities have detained soccer club Antalyaspor's Israeli player Sagiv Jehezkel for questioning after he displayed solidarity with people held hostage by the Hamas militant organization during a top-flight league game.

The player told police he was simply calling for an end to the war when after scoring a goal he displayed a bandage on his wrist with the words "100 Days 7.10" — in reference to Oct. 7, the day Hamas attacked Israel and the hostages were abducted — next to a Star of David.

Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc said late Sunday that Jehezkel, a 28-year-old Israeli international, is under investigation over possible charges of "openly inciting the public to hatred and hostility."

Tunc maintained in a statement posted on X that Jehezkel had engaged in "an ugly gesture in support of the Israeli massacre in Gaza." *—AP*

Jehezkel ***PHOTO: AL JAZEERA***

Focus on Satwik-Chirag as home shuttlers look to dazzle

NEW DELHI, 15 JAN

Expectations will be high when Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty spearhead the home challenge at the India Open Super 750 badminton tournament beginning here on Tuesday, hoping to annex their first silverware of the new season. With six titles in 2023, Satwik and Chirag have been a cut above the rest of the Indians, and the runner-up finish at the Malaysia Super 1000 has only spiced things up as the Indian shuttlers look to deliver at home. The BAI's flagship tournament, which was upgraded to Super 750 in 2023, proved a dampener last season when none of the Indians could cross the second round. In the 2022 edition, Satwik-Chirag and Lakshya Sen stood at the podium with the men's doubles and men's singles crown and the home shuttlers will hope to once again live up to the expectations and prove that last year was an aberration. Satwik and Chirag have all the wherewithal to go the distance this time as the duo will be charged up after coming marginally short in the final in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday. "We want to do well in our home country next week, so we don't want to relax with this, we are more hungry and next week we want to do well in front of our home crowd," Satwik said on Sunday. Second seeds Satwik and Chirag, who were forced to pull out ahead of the second round last year due to an injury suffered by the former, will face world No. 25 Fang-Jen Lee and Fang-Chih Lee of Taipei in their opening round. *—PTI*

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Gauff advances to 2nd round in bid for consecutive titles

MELBOURNE, 15 JAN

With increased confidence in her serve thanks to some advice from Andy Roddick, Coco Gauff began her quest for back-to-back Grand Slam singles titles with a 6-3, 6-0 victory over Anna Karolina Schmiedlova at the Australian Open on Monday.

The 19-year-old American, who won her first major at the US Open in September, wrapped up victory in exactly one hour. "I was a little nervous the first set," fourth-seeded Gauff said. "I think I did well returning, then I found my serve toward the end (of the set). When I was nervous at 3-3, I told myself: I feel good, I look good, so just have fun'. That was able to relax me a little bit'."

Gauff dropped just one point on her serve in the second set and said that former No. 1 Roddick had recently given her some serving tips.

"It was really cool," she said. "He's a really chill guy. I met him before but never to that level. I went to Charlotte (North Carolina) for two days. It was a really good two days. I think that my serve has improved. He's probably one of the best servers in history . . . "

Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova was beaten 6-1, 6-2 by Dayana Yastremska.

Seventh-seeded Vondrousova missed the Adelaide tune-up event with a hip injury and struggled on serve throughout, hitting seven double faults.

"I didn't practice because I was injured," she said. "I think that was the important thing. I lost myself at the beginning." *—AP*

Coco Gauff of the US waves after defeating Anna Karolina of Slovakia in their first round match ***PHOTO: AP***

DEFINITE POSSIBILITY IT WAS MY LAST AUSTRALIAN OPEN, SAYS MURRAY

MELBOURNE, 15 JAN

Andy Murray says there is a "definite possibility" he has played his final Australian Open after a subdued display against Tomas Martin Etcheverry in a first-round exit.

The 36-year-old Briton showed little emotion as he lost 6-4 6-2 6-2 on the second day of the Melbourne tournament.

Murray, a five-time finalist, failed to reach the second round for only the second time in his past 13 appearances. "I won't win many matches playing that way," Murray said. "It's a definite possibility that will be the last time I play here." After conceding in pre-season that 2024 could be his final season before retirement, the Scot has lost both of his matches this year.

Murray told BBC Sport in Brisbane he would think about ending his stellar career if he did not enjoy playing this year, having struggled for form in the closing stages of the 2023 season.

Since the start of the US Open in August, Murray has lost eight of his past 12 matches - including the past four. Murray is the second Briton to fall in the singles at Melbourne Park, following Jodie Burrage's defeat on Sunday. *—BBC News*

Andy Murray ***PHOTO: PTI***

404 NOT OUT

Prakhar Chaturvedi breaks Yuvraj's record with unbeaten 404

SHIVAMOGGA, 15 JAN

Karnataka's Prakhar Chaturvedi on Monday broke Yuvraj Singh's 25-year-old record for the highest score in the U-19 Cooch Behar Trophy final with an unbeaten 404 off 636 balls against Mumbai here.

Yuvraj, who went on to become an Indian great, had smashed 358 for Punjab in a game against Bihar back in 1999. India's World Cup winning captain MS Dhoni was part of that Bihar squad. The highest individual score in India's premier U-19 domestic event is Vijay Zol's 451 not out for Maharashtra against Assam in 2011-12.

Chaturvedi's epic effort included 46 fours and three sixes.

"Karnataka's Prakhar Chaturvedi becomes the first player to score 400 in the final of #CoochBehar Trophy with his splendid 404* knock against Mumbai," posted the BCCI on X. Charturvedi's marathon effort helped Karnataka amass 890 for eight in response to Mumbai's 380.

The game was drawn with Karnataka taking the first innings lead.

Harshil Dhamani scored 179 in Karnataka's innings. The game was called of once Chaturvedi cross the 400-run mark.

"It is a great feeling. I am delighted that the innings came in the final, and helped Karnataka earn the first title (Cooch Behar). Feeling a bit tired but, yes, nothing can match the happiness of a team winning the title and you are contributing to it," Chaturvedi told PTI.

Chaturvedi comes from a household that has placed academics as the first priority as his father, Sanjay Kumar Chaturvedi, owns a software firm in Electronics City, while Rupa, his mother, is a technical advisor in DRDO. But that has not prevented them from allowing their son to pursue his heart's calling.

"They have been very supportive of me from the time I took up cricket as an eight-year-old. They had even availed me of the services of a private throwdown expert during the (Covid-19) lockdown. Fortunately, I have been able to carry both cricket and studies together," he added. *—PTI*

Karnataka's Prakhar Chaturvedi becomes the first player to score 400 in the final of Cooch Behar Trophy with his unbeaten 404 against Mumbai ***PHOTO: PTI***

SERVICES, MAHARASHTRA GET THREE POINTS IN RANJI TROPHY

PUNE, 15 JAN

Services and Maharashtra got three points for gaining the decisive first innings lead in the drawn Ranji Trophy games against Rajasthan and Jharkand on Monday. Resuming day four at 543 for four, Maharashtra ended up declaring at 605 for five in their first innings. Their innings saw three hundreds from Pavan Shah (136), veterans Kedar Jadhav (182) and Ankit Bawne (131). Jharkhand, who made 403 in the first innings, were 167 for two in the second when the game was called off here. The result was also a foregone conclusion in the Group A game between Service and Rajasthan in Delhi. Rajasthan, who were 131 for nine in their first innings overnight, were bundled out for 153 all all out. Made to follow-on, Rajasthan were 130 for no loss when the captains decided to shake hands. Services got the all important three points by 466 in their first innings.

Brief scores: In Pune: Jharkhand 1st innings: 403 all out and 167/2 in 45 overs (Kumar Suraj 70, Nazim Siddique 61) Maharashtra 1st innings: 605/5 decl in 143 overs (Kedar Jadhav 182, Pavan Shah 136, Ankit Bawne 131). Maharashtra 3 points, Jharkhand 1.

—PTI